Photo *E. J. Thomas.*

Fair Fortune-teller, may the Fates decree
That no ill-luck by thee shall e'er be spoken.
Thy beauteous eyes would weep, were they to see
Life's sunshine cast dark shadows on hearts broken.

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FORTUNE'S FAVOURITE.

From the Painting by Sir L. Alma Tadema.

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FROM THE STALLS.

Yours Ever,
devoted friend.
To you This Christmas tide -
A little girl Lee speaking
Ideas
And lots of Love
besides.
Adrienne Augarde.

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Sweetest sounds of Xmas bells,
Red & green of holly
Frost & snow & mistletoe,
Fun & freak & folly.
Every thing my spirit tells
Your Xmas should be jolly.
Madge Kelly

Photo Ellis & Walery.

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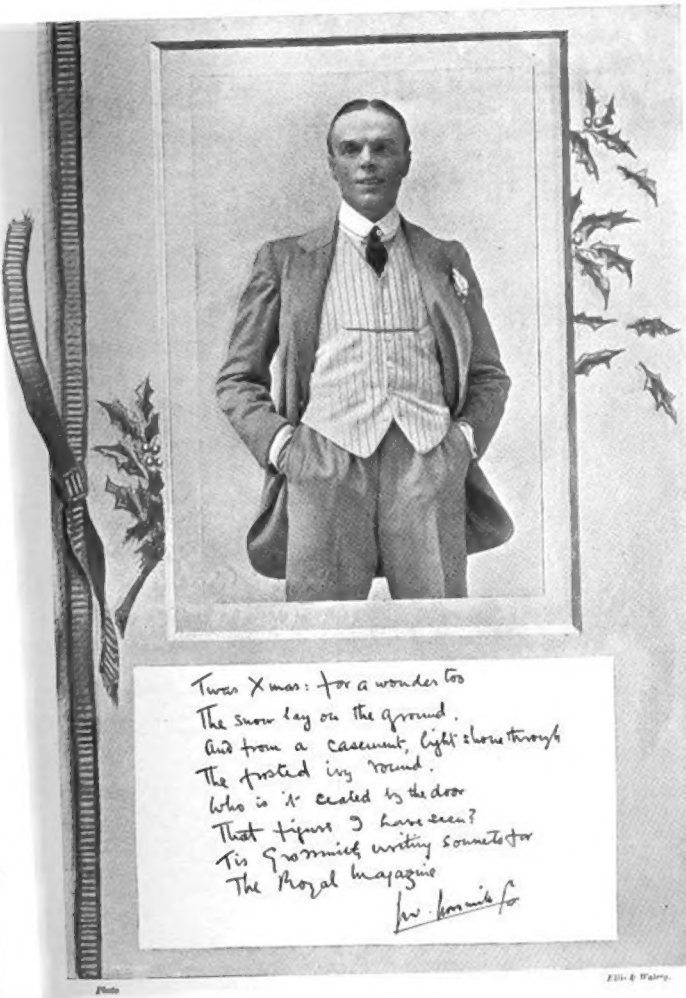
'Twas X mas: for a wonder too
The snow lay on the ground.
And from a casement, light shone through
The frosted ivy round.
Who is it crouched by the door
That figure I have seen?
'Tis Grossmith writing sonnets for
The Royal Magazine
Geo. Grossmith
Photo
Ellis & Walery.

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Photo Bassano.

Yours for Xmas, and
Xmas weather,
We all crowd round the
fire together,
Watching the Chestnuts
fizzy & crack,
Never an instant the fun
grows slack.
Xmas is Paradise for me,
May yours as bright & merry
be.
Yours Smithson

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Photo: Lizzie Caswell Smith.

GHOSTS.

A merry Xmas to you all,
And, 'cos my yarn must somehow rhyme,
I'll tell you what did once befall
Me, by myself, at Xmas time.

I went to stay with country folk
In a lone house they said was haunted;
I felt that this would be a joke.
In fact, the very thing I wanted.

For I had never seen a "haunt,"
'Cos ghosts they never took to me.
But now I've seen just all I want,
And think it 'orrid shivery.

Xmas Day; 12 midnight, over the fire.

We talked of ghosts, and castle keeps
And all the terrors walking there,
Until we fairly got the creeps,
And felt grim fingers clutch our hair.

Bedtime; 1.30.

My courage vanished with the light.
A chain clanked grimly! What was that?
Oh, awful sound! my heart stopped quite:
The ghost stopped, too—upon the mat.

Four seconds later—it seemed an eternity.

With parching tongue and dread surmise
Some leaden seconds slowly crept;
I wildly watched two glaring eyes,
And then . . . **THE WEIRD THING LEAPT!**

One minute later. The mystery solved.

'Twas neither ghosts nor Santa Claus,
Nor hideous ghoul with clanking chain;
My puppy had transgressed the laws,
And wanted to be friends again.

Lonie Sheear

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I hope that this Magazine's readers
And writers for that matter too
In all Time's days will be leaders.
More than this I can't say, now
can you?
Millie Legarde

Photo Play Pictorial.

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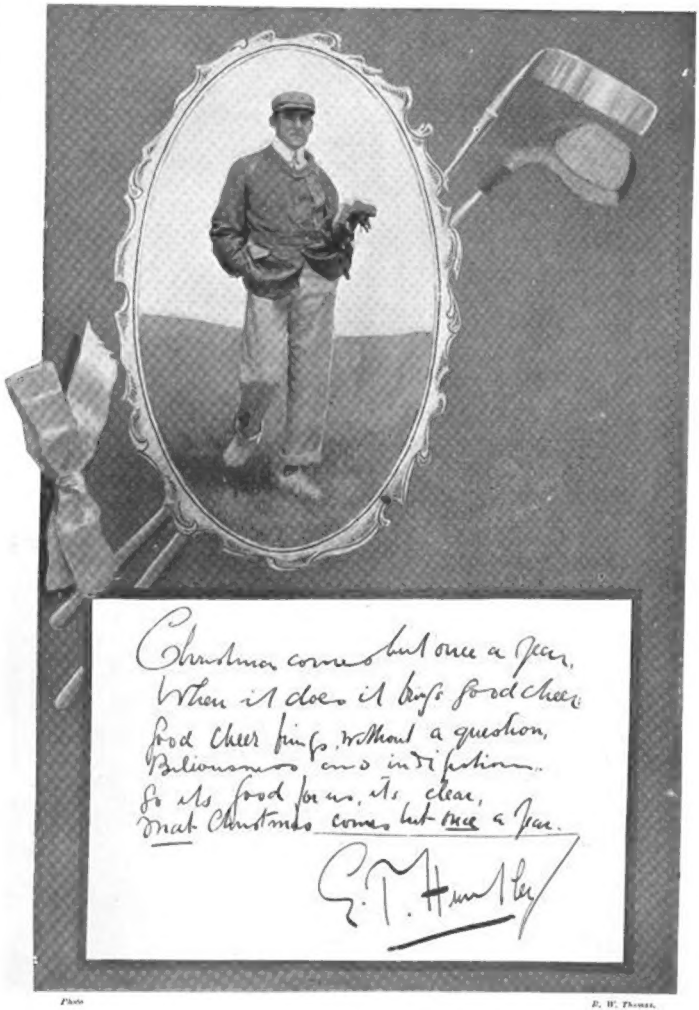
Christmas comes but once a year,
When it does it brings good cheer.
Good Cheer brings, without a question,
Biliousness and indigestion.
So its good for us, its clear,
That Christmas comes but once a year.
G. T. Hawtrey

Photo *F. W. Thomas.*

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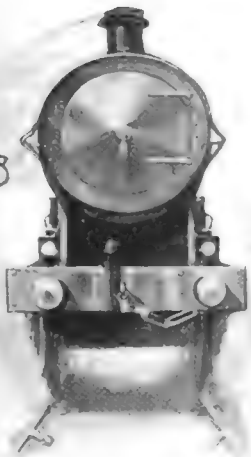
STORIES OF THE RAILWAY.



ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING.

BY VICTOR L. WHITECHURCH.

Thorpe Hazell, the Hero of this Series, is an Eccentric Individual whose Hobbies are Vegetarianism, Physical Exercise, and the Solving of Railway Mysteries. His Successful Unravelling of another Knotty Problem forms the Subject of this Story.

VI.—THE AFFAIR OF THE GERMAN DISPATCH-BOX.

THORPE HAZELL often said afterwards that the most daring case which he ever undertook was that of the German Dispatch Box. It was an affair of international importance at the time, and, for obvious reasons, remained shrouded in mystery. Now, however, when it may be relegated to the region of obsolete diplomatic crises, there is no reason why it should not, to a certain extent, be made public.

Hazell was only half through his breakfast one morning at his house in Netherton, when a telegram arrived for him, with this message:

Am coming by next train. Wish to consult you on important question.

MORTON COTTERELL.

"Cotterell, Cotterell," said Hazell to himself. "Oh, yes, I remember—he was on the same staircase with myself at St. Philip's. A reading man in those days. I haven't seen him for years. Surely he's something in the Government now. Let me see."

He got his Whitaker and consulted its pages. Presently he found what he wanted.

"Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs—Morton Cotterell."

As soon as he had finished his breakfast, including his pint of lemonade, he produced a "Book of Exercises," and carefully went through the following directions:

"Stand in correct position, commence to inhale, and at the same time commence to tense the muscles of the arms, and raise them to an extended front horizontal position; leave the hands to drop limp from the wrists. While doing this change the weight of the body from the full foot on to the toes; in this position hold the breath, and make rigid and extended the muscles of the arms, sides, neck, abdomen, and legs. Repeat this fifteen times."

Half-an-hour or so later Morton Cotterell was ushered into his room. He was a tall, thin man, with a black moustache that made his naturally pale face look almost white. There was a haggard look about him, and certain dark lines under his eyes showed pretty plainly that he was suffering from want of sleep.

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"It's a good many years since we met, Hazell," he began, "and you have gained quite a reputation since the old college days."

"Ah, I see you have read my monograph on 'Nerve Culture and Rational Food,'" replied Hazell.

"Never heard of it," said Cotterell. "No, I mean your reputation as a railway expert, my dear fellow."

"Oh, railways!" exclaimed Hazell in a disappointed tone of voice. "They're just a hobby of mine, that's all. Is that why you've come?"

"Exactly. I called at your flat in town, but was told you were here. I want to consult you on a delicate matter, Hazell; one in which your knowledge of railways may prove of great value. Of course, it is understood that what I am going to say is quite private."

"Certainly."

"Well, let me put a case. Suppose a man was travelling, say, from London to the Continent by the ordinary boat train; and suppose that it was desirable to prevent that man from getting to his destination, would it—well—would it be possible to prevent him doing so?"

Hazell smiled.

"Your enigma is a difficult one to answer," he said. "It would all depend upon the means you cared to employ. I daresay it could be done, but you would probably have to resort to force."

"That would hardly be politic. I want you to suggest some plan by which he could be got into a wrong train, or got out of the right one, so that, let us say, something he was carrying would be lost, or, at least, delayed in transit."

"You are not very clear, Cotterell. First you speak of the *man* being frustrated, and then of something he is carrying. What do you mean? Which is of the greater importance—the man or his property?"

"His property."

"That puts a different aspect on it. I take it this is some intrigue of your profession. Why not place confidence in me, and tell me the whole thing? I never like to work on supposition. Once some fellows tried to draw me on a supposed case of wrecking a train. I could have told them half-a-dozen theories of my own invention, but I held my tongue, and lucky it was that I did so, for I found out afterwards they belonged to an American train robber gang. I don't accuse you of any nefarious purposes, but if you want my advice, tell me the exact circumstances. Only, I warn you beforehand, Cotterell, that I won't give you any tips that would either compromise me or be of danger to any railway company."

"Very well," replied the Under-Secretary, "I will tell you the leading facts without betraying any State secrets, except to mention that there is a great stake involved. To cut matters short, a very important document has been stolen from our office. We pretty well know the culprit, only we have no proof. But we are certain of one thing and that is that this document is at present in the hands of the German Ambassador. You will understand that the ways of diplomacy are very subtle and that it is a case which makes action very difficult. If we were to demand the surrender of this paper we should be met, I have no doubt, with a bland denial that it is in the Ambassador's possession.

"Of course we have our secret agents, and they have told us that Colonel Von Kriegen, one of the messengers of the German Embassy, has been ordered to start at midday with dispatches to Berlin. It is more than likely—in fact it is a dead certainty—that this particular document will be included in his dispatches. Now, if it once gets into the possession of the German Chancellery, there will be a bad international trouble which might even land us in a Continental war. If you can devise any means of obstructing or preventing the transit of this dispatch you would be rendering the country a real service."

Hazell thought for a moment.

"Do you think this Colonel Von Kriegen knows of the document he is carrying?" he asked presently.

"I shouldn't think so, its contents are of far too much importance to trust even to a regular messenger. No, he will probably be told to exercise the greatest care, and his journey will be watched and himself guarded by the German secret police."

"How is he likely to carry the document?"

"In his dispatch-box, together with other papers."

"And he will probably travel with secret police. My dear fellow, you have given me a hard nut to crack. Let me think a bit."

He lit a cigarette and smoked hard for a few minutes. Presently he asked Cotterell if the dispatch-box had a handle to it.

"Yes—of course," replied the Under-Secretary; "a leather handle."

"I wish I knew exactly what it was like."

"I can easily tell you. All the dispatch-boxes of the German Embassy are of the

same pattern. It is our business to know the smallest details. It would be about a foot long, eight inches broad, and about five inches deep, with a handle on the top—a dark green box."

Hazell's face lit up with sudden interest.

"You haven't one exactly like it?" he asked.

"Yes, we have. At my office."

"Will the key be with the Colonel?"

"Of course not. The Ambassador here will lock it, and it will not be opened till it is in the hands of the Chancellor in Berlin."

Hazell jumped to his feet and began to stride up and down the room.

"Cotterell!" he exclaimed, "there's just one plan that occurs to me. It's a very desperate one, and even if it succeeds it will land me in prison."

"In England?" asked the other.

"Rather. I'm not going to play any tricks on the Continent, I can tell you. Now, suppose I'm able to carry out this plan and am imprisoned—say at Dovehaven—what would happen?"

He stopped abruptly in his walk and looked at Cotterell. A grin broke over the latter's face, and he said, quietly:

"Oh—you'd escape, Hazell."

"Very good. I shall want help. *You'd* better not come. Have you got a knowing fellow whom you can trust? He must be a sharp chap, mind."

"Yes, I have. One of our private men named Bartlett."

"Good. There are just two hours before the Continental train starts, and a quarter of an hour before you get a train back to town. You wire Bartlett from Netherton to meet you, and I'll write out instructions for you to give him. He'll have an hour in which to carry them out."

He wrote rapidly for five minutes upon a sheet of paper, and then handed it over to the Under-Secretary.

"Mind you," he said, "the chances are terribly against us, and I can only promise to do my best. I shall follow you to town by another train that will give me just time to catch the boat express. What is this Von Kriegen like?"

Cotterell described him.

"Good—now you must be off!"

Three-quarters of an hour later Hazell came out of his house, somewhat changed in appearance. He had put on the same dark wig which he wore in the affair of Crane's cigars, and was dressed in a black serge suit and straw hat. A clerical collar completed the deception of a clergyman in semi-mufti.

* * * * *

A stiffly-upright, military-looking man, with the ends of his fair moustache strongly waxed, dressed in a frock coat suit and tall hat, and carrying a dispatch-box, walked down the platform beside the boat train, the guard, who knew him well by sight—as he knew many who travelled on that line with their precious dispatches—giving him a salute as he passed.

Two men walked closely, but unobtrusively behind the Colonel; two men whose eyes and ears were on the alert, and who scrutinised everyone carefully as they passed along. Of their presence the Special Messenger took not the slightest notice, though he was well aware of their companionship. He selected a first-class compartment, and got in. The two men followed him into the carriage, but without saying a word. One of them posted himself by the window and kept a steady look out on to the platform.

The train was just about to start, and the guard had just put his whistle to his mouth, when a man came running down the platform, a small bag in one hand, a bundle of papers and an umbrella in the other. It was only a clergyman, and the man at the window gave a smile as he saw him.

With a rush, the clergyman made for the compartment, seizing the handle of the door and opening it. Frantically he threw his bag, umbrella, and papers into the carriage. The train had just begun to move.

The man near the window had retreated at the onslaught. He was just about to resent the intrusion with the words that the compartment was engaged, when a porter, running up behind the clergyman, pushed him in and slammed the door.

"I thought I'd lost it!" exclaimed the intruder, taking off his hat and wiping the perspiration from his forehead, for it was a very hot day, and he had been hurrying. "It was a close shave! Oh, thank you, thank you!" he added, as one of the men rather ungraciously picked up his bag and papers from the floor, at the same time eyeing him closely.

But Hazell, in his disguise, was perfectly proof against any suspicion. He sat down and opened the *Guardian* with an easy air, just looking round at each of his three companions in such a naturally inquisitive manner as to thoroughly disarm them from the outset. The Colonel had lighted a cigar

and said, half apologetically, as he took it from his lips:

"I hope you don't mind smoking?"

"Oh, not at all. I do it myself occasionally," returned the clergyman, with an amiable smile.

The train was now fairly under way, and Hazell was beginning, as he read his paper, to take mental stock of his surroundings and the positions in which the other three were seated.

He, himself, was facing the engine on the left-hand side of the compartment, close to the window. Immediately opposite to him sat Colonel von Kriegen, watchful and alert, although he seemed to smoke so complacently. Beside the Colonel, on the seat on his left, was the precious dispatch-box; and the Colonel's hand, as it dangled negligently over the arm-rest, touched it ever and anon. On the next seat, guarding the dispatch-box on that side, sat one of the secret police agents, while the other had placed himself next to Hazell and, consequently, opposite the box, which was thus thoroughly guarded at all points.

It was this dispatch-box that Hazell was studying as he apparently read his paper, noting its exact position and distance from him. As he had told Morton Cotterell, the chances of carrying out his plan were very much against him, and he felt that this was more than ever the case now. He had really hoped to secure a seat beside the box. But this was out of the question.

After a bit he put down his paper, leant forward, and looked out of the window, watching the country as they sped through it. Once, just as they were passing through a station, he stood up and leant his head out of the window for a minute. The three men exchanged glances now that his back was turned, but the Colonel only smiled and shook his head slightly.

Then Hazell sat down once more, yawned, gathered up his paper, and made another apparent attempt to read it. After a bit, he drew a cigarette case from his pocket, took out a cigarette, and placed it in his mouth. Then he leant forward, in a very natural attitude, and began feeling in his waistcoat pocket for a match.

The German Colonel watched him, carelessly flicking the ash from his cigar as he did so. Then, as it was apparent that the clergyman could find no matches, his politeness came to the front.

"You want a light, sir," he said in very good English, "can I offer you one?"

"Oh, thanks!" replied Hazell, shifting to the edge of his seat, and leaning still more forward, "perhaps I may take one from your cigar?"

Every action that followed had been most carefully thought out beforehand. As he leant over towards the German he turned his back slightly on the man who sat beside him. He held the cigarette with the first and second fingers of his right hand and with the end of it in his mouth. He kept his eyes fixed on the Colonel's. Meanwhile his left hand went out through the open window, dropped over the sill, remained there a moment, then came back, and crossed over the front of his body stealthily with the palm downwards.

It was all over in a second, before either of the three had time to grasp what was happening. He had his face close up to the Colonel's, and had taken a puff at the cigarette, when suddenly his left hand swooped down on the handle of the dispatch-box, his right hand flew forward into the Colonel's face, instantly coming round with a quick sweep to his left hand, and, before the Colonel could recover or either of the others take action, he had tossed the dispatch box out of the window.

They were on him at once. He sprang up, back to the window, and made a little struggle, but the Colonel and one of the others had him on the seat in no time. Meanwhile the third man had pulled the electric safety signal, and had dashed to the window. Thrusting his head out, he looked back along the level bit of line on which they were running.

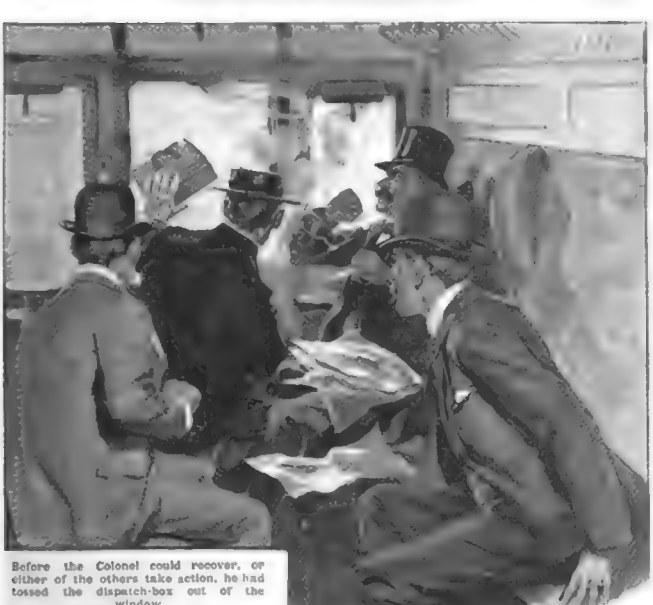
"I can see it!" he cried triumphantly, as his eye caught a dark object beside the track. The whole affair had taken place so suddenly that the train began to pull up within fifteen or twenty seconds of the throwing out of the dispatch case. There was a shrill whistle, a grinding of brakes, and the train came to a standstill.

The guard was out of his van in an instant, running along beside the train.

"What is it?" he asked, as he came up to the carriage.

The police agent, who still kept his eyes fixed back on the track, beckoned him to come up. Heads were out of windows, and this matter was a private one. So the guard climbed on to the footboard.

"A dispatch-box has been thrown out of the carriage," whispered the police agent; "we have the man here. But we *must* get the case. It's only a little way back. We pulled



Before the Colonel could recover, or either of the others take action, he had tossed the dispatch-box out of the window.

the signal at once—in fact, I could see it lying beside the track before we stopped."

"Very good, sir," replied the guard quietly, commencing to wave an arm towards the rear of the train. The signal was seen on the engine, and the train began to reverse. Very soon a small, dark object could be seen alongside the rails. As they drew close, the guard held out his hand motionless, the train stopped, and he jumped off.

"Is this it?" he asked, as he handed in the dispatch-box.

"Yes!" exclaimed the Colonel. "it's all right. Thank you, guard. Here's something for your trouble. We'll hand over the fellow to the police at Dovehaven. It was a clumsy trick."

Colonel Von Kriegen lit another cigar as the train went on, and looked at Hazell, who sat between the two police agents. There was a half smile on the Colonel's lips as he said:

'I'm afraid you did not quite succeed, sir! It was a sharp thing to do, but it didn't go quite far enough. You might have been sure that in broad daylight, and with the means of stopping the train, that it was impossible. Who put you on to this?"

"I accept the entire responsibility myself," replied Hazell—"failure and all. I have only one favour to ask you. Will you allow me to eat my lunch?"

"Oh, certainly," replied the Colonel grimly—"especially as you won't have a chance of doing so when we arrive at Dovehaven. I should like you to travel all the

way with us, but the exigencies of international law prevent that."

Hazell bowed, and the next moment was placidly consuming Plasmon biscuits and drinking sterilised milk, expatiating at intervals on "natural food."

"Try a diet of maccaroni and Dutch cheese," were his last words to the Colonel. "They both help to build up the grey brain material. Useful in your position!"

When the train arrived at Dovehaven, Hazell was given into the charge of the police there, and marched off to the station. Here the superintendent looked at him curiously. Hazell met his gaze, but nothing was said. It was strange, however, that he was not locked up in an ordinary cell, but in a small room.

It was also strange that the bar of the window was very loose, and that no one was about when he dropped out of it that night. The German police, when they heard about it, smiled. Diplomatic affairs are peculiar, and they knew that this particular "criminal" would never be caught.

Meanwhile, the Colonel journeyed on to Berlin, with the full assurance in his mind that the papers in his dispatch-box were intact. He duly handed the latter over in person to the Chancellor, who, as the result of a cipher telegram, was eagerly expecting it.

Somehow, his key did not fit the lock of the dispatch-box. After trying it for a few moments, he exclaimed:

"Colonel, how is this? This is not one of our boxes, surely?"

The Colonel's face turned pale, and he hesitated to reply. Snatching up a knife, the Chancellor forced open the box, a cry of dismay issuing from his lips as he drew out the contents—the current number of *Punch*, in which he figured in a cartoon, and a copy of the *Standard*, containing an article, carefully marked, on the foreign policy of the Government. Insult to injury, if you like.

German oaths never look well in print, and, anyhow, it is needless to record the ensuing conversation between the Chancellor and Colonel Von Kriegen. At about the time it was taking place the German Ambassador in London received by post the original dispatch-box and its contents, minus the incriminating document, which now reposed safely in the custody of the Foreign Office, thanks to the ingenuity of Thorpe Hazell.

* * * * * *

"How was it done?" said Hazell afterwards, when telling the story to a companion. "Oh, it was a pure trick, and I hardly

The Chancellor forced open the box, a cry of dismay issuing from his lips as he drew out the contents.

expected to be able to bring it off. Fortunately, Bartlett was a 'cute chap, and followed out all my instructions to the letter. Those instructions were very simple. I told him to wear an Inverness cloak, to provide himself with the duplicate dispatch-box, a few yards of very strong fishing twine, a fair-sized snap-hook, and a light walking-stick with a forked bit of wire stuck in the end of it. The only difficulty about his job was the presence of other travellers in his compartment, but, as it happened, there were only two maiden ladies, who thought him mad on fresh air.

"Of course, I told him how to use his various articles, and also that on no account was he to communicate with me either by word or look, but that he was to get into the compartment next to that in which the Colonel was travelling, and to be ready to command either window by reserving a seat with a bag on one side and seating himself on the other.

"The cloak served for a double purpose—to hide the dispatch-box and to conceal his movements from the occupants of his carriage when the time for action came. Fortunately, both his companions sat with their backs to the engine, so that he was easily able to command either window.

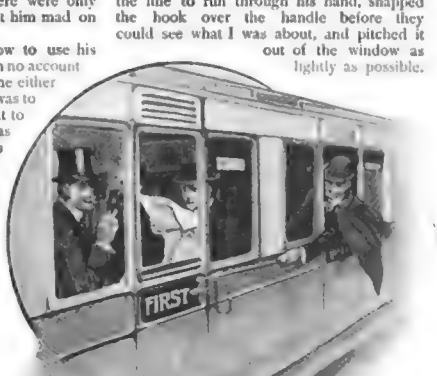
"I was to let him know which side of the train was the sphere of action by putting out my head as we ran through Eastwood. He would then look out of both windows and get to work accordingly.

"What he did was this. He had the snap-hook tied tightly to the end of the fishing-line. By leaning out of the window and slinging this hook on the fork of his walking-stick he was able to reach it along the side of the carriage—holding his stick at the other end—and slip the hook over the handle outside my door, where it hung by its cord.

"He then dropped the stick and held the cord loosely in his right hand, the slack end ready to run out. This, you will observe, kept the hook hanging on my handle. With his left hand he drew the dispatch-box from under his cloak and held it outside the carriage, ready to drop it instantly.

"Of course he was standing all the time, with his head and shoulders out of the window.

"When I leant forward to light my cigarette at the Colonel's cigar, I slipped my left hand out of the window, easily found the hook hanging there, grasped it, and kept it open with one finger. Bartlett, who was watching, got ready. You can easily guess the rest. I swung my left hand suddenly over to the dispatch-box, Bartlett allowing the line to run through his hand, snapped the hook over the handle before they could see what I was about, and pitched it out of the window as lightly as possible.



"This, you will observe, kept the hook hanging on my handle."

"The same instant Bartlett dropped the duplicate box from the train, grasped the line tightly as the real dispatch-box flew out, and hauled it in, hand over hand. He very soon had the dispatch-box safely stowed under his cloak, and, on reaching Dovehaven, took the next train back to town, to the no small satisfaction of his chief.

Unluckily, I quite forgot to ask Cottrell to mention in the wire I knew he would be sending to the police at Dovehaven to have a dish of lentils ready for me in my brief imprisonment. It was very awkward. But they made me an exceedingly well-cooked tapioca pudding."

One week's waste from "nipping" cigars and throwing away the stumps in London alone would make a cigar twenty-five feet long, and thick in proportion.

THE WASTE OF LONDON.

How Unconsidered Trifles which We Throw away Mount up.

By John E. Doyle.

The six-and-a-half millions of people who populate this huge London of ours are mostly poor. Yet they manage to waste unconsidered trifles enough to represent in £ *s. d.* a big fortune or two. Every man, woman, and child do their share in the great, unplanned scheme of loss.

On the authority of Sir William Ramsay, Sheffield throws into its sewers five tons of the best steel every day that trade is carried on there. Thus, in one short year, some 2000 tons of valuable metal is lost. Converted into cool cash, this means that a rather tidy fortune is swept away. Unfortunately, up to the present no one has succeeded in introducing any method of gathering together the particles which fly away from the many grindstones of the cutlery capital.

In London, during the past decade or two, some efforts have been made to avoid, in a little part at least, the enormous waste that the scavenging of a big city is apt to bring about. For instance, although bitter experience has so frequently shattered the delightful superstition of rural minds that the streets of London are paved with gold, it is not so much of a fairy tale to say that a good deal of the precious yellow metal may be found in the dustbins which in the early morning decorate its pavements.

London's waste in cigarette ends for a month would make a cigarette a hundred and thirty-five feet long, sufficient to create an impression if placed beside the Nelson Column.

Many persons gain a living by rooting amongst the rubbish in the dustbins of picture-frame makers, photographers, manufacturing jewellers, gilders, gold-beaters, bookbinders, and other tradesmen whose business involves the use of gold in any form. This rubbish, transferred to the furnaces of the refiner, produces tiny grains of the precious metal in sufficient quantity to repay the efforts of the collector.

Then, again, the great wharves, where the contractors' carts shoot their loads of rubbish, now give employment to numbers of poor people whose duty it is to examine every pound of the stuff, sorting out anything likely to prove of value, from old preserved meat tins to corks and buttons. Men and women may be seen literally up to their armpits in the sweepings of London, rescuing all manner of seemingly useless articles from the flaming maw of the

destructor. And the process is said to pay the contractors very well indeed.

The cigarette packets thrown away in London every week contain sufficient cardboard to make a box as large as the one shown above.

Apart from this, however, London's waste in trifles may be regarded as positively astounding.

A well-known authority who has given his views on the subject, has dealt with many items in which the Londoner may be regarded as a perfect prodigal.

Take cigars, for instance. The first thing a man does when he takes one out of his case to indulge in a smoke is to nip the end which goes between his lips. The thing has been so carefully worked out that we are given details which are really surprising. Cigar-smoking, among a certain class, is a large and increasing habit. The twopenny article is just in as much demand as the finest-flavoured Havana. Nowadays almost every man smokes cigars, good, bad, and indifferent; and in each case the cigar is nipped. The nippings represent a certain quantity of tobacco wasted.

And that is not all.

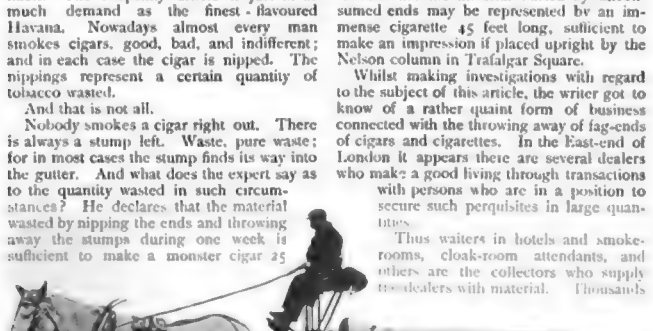
Nobody smokes a cigar right out. There is always a stump left. Waste, pure waste; for in most cases the stump finds its way into the gutter. And what does the expert say as to the quantity wasted in such circumstances? He declares that the material wasted by nipping the ends and throwing away the stumps during one week is sufficient to make a monster cigar 25 feet long and thick in proportion! One's imagination almost fails to grasp the dimensions of the cigar that could be constructed out of a year's similar waste.

Small boys, grown men, and even some of the fairer sex, find solace to a more or less considerable degree in the soothing cigarette; many millions are consumed weekly in London alone. Therefore, it is hardly necessary to point out that an enormous waste of tobacco is inevitable owing to the fact that no cigarette is consumed in its entirety.

It is computed that out of every ounce of cigarettes purchased by the public one-eighth is wasted in fag-ends. A month's loss in this way is stupendous, being even more imposing than that of cigars. Carefully calculated, it is found that the material wasted by unconsumed ends may be represented by an immense cigarette 45 feet long, sufficient to make an impression if placed upright by the Nelson column in Trafalgar Square.

Whilst making investigations with regard to the subject of this article, the writer got to know of a rather quaint form of business connected with the throwing away of fag-ends of cigars and cigarettes. In the East-end of London it appears there are several dealers who make a good living through transactions with persons who are in a position to secure such perquisites in large quantities.

Thus waiters in hotels and smoke-rooms, cloak-room attendants, and others are the collectors who supply the dealers with material. Thousands



The total of London's wasted puts for a week would, if melted down, make a "put" eleven feet long and six inches in diameter—a heavy load for a strong horse.

of cigar and cigarette ends are disposed of daily to these dealers, who, by the way, are not above purchasing such "dainties" from the shabby-looking individuals who haunt racecourses and other popular resorts, with no other object in view than picking up derelict tobacco.

When the dealer has acquired sufficient stock, the fag-ends are carefully broken up, the materials sorted and placed in trays labelled, for instance, "Prime West End Mixture," or "Goodwood Hand-cut." On Sunday mornings these delectable collections are exhibited for sale at certain centres where the lower classes are wont to do their belated marketing.

There, gentlemen who are not too particular as to their brand of tobacco may purchase, according to their choice, a week's supply at from one penny to three-halfpence an ounce, thereby saving the difference in price between it and the strongest-smelling "shag." It will therefore be seen that at least some cigar stumps and fag-ends of cigarettes are not ruthlessly wasted.

The enormous consumption of cigarettes by London's multitudes leads to another form of waste—the waste of the gaudily-coloured packets in which most of them are sold all over the country. No attempt has apparently ever been made to utilise the material of which the cardboard boxes are made. Hundreds of thousands are thrown away into the gutter to be trampled on and reduced to pulp, afterwards to be swept away into the sewers and the limbo of things that once were.

There is an exception, perhaps, in the case of a few which are rescued by those amiable lunatics who make a hobby of collecting empty cigarette packets of all sorts and sizes, to exhibit to uninterested victims who may chance to visit the home of the collector.

Beyond this, the cardboard, having once served its purpose, is absolutely wasted, although there are surely many ways of utilising the material for further commercial purposes. At present, according to expert knowledge, the number of cigarette packets wasted weekly in London alone would form a sheet of cardboard sufficiently large to provide material for an immense packet 18½ feet long, 13 feet broad, and 5½ feet high!

The result of all the hairpins lost in London during a week being made into one: a "hairpin" twenty-three feet long, wide enough for a cyclist to ride through.

One of the most valuable articles ever invented is the common pin of everyday and universal use. What would life be worth without a supply? One shudders at the bare suggestion of a pinless world! The responsibility that a pin is capable of bearing is often awe-inspiring. In spite of this, perhaps there is no accessory to human comfort more carelessly regarded. Millions of pins are being manufactured every day in the year. They are always in demand, and they are always getting lost. Otherwise they would accumulate in a most awkward manner.

As fast as pins are manufactured they drop, as it were, out of existence. The ordinary person who stoops to pick up a pin "for luck" loses a dozen for every one he or she finds. That is why machines are ceaselessly employed turning those articles out by the million.

Few people give a thought to the enormous quantity of valuable metal wasted almost every minute of the day, and all in lost pins. London alone, not to mention the rest of England, absolutely eats up pins. Would it surprise the readers of the ROYAL to learn that the inhabitants of the biggest city in the world, where money is so difficult to obtain, carelessly drop from their clothing, in one short day, pins enough to supply a town as large as Portsmouth with a week's requirements of these indispensable articles? Yet this is so. The metal, if remelted, might be drawn out into a huge "pin" 11 feet long and 6 inches in diameter, and weighing enough to provide a heavy load for a strong horse to pull!

A perfect rain of hairpins falls upon the pavements of the London streets every day. It

begins with the early morn, and goes on far beyond the dewy eve; in fact, just as long as the female portion of the population, as well as visitors of the same sex, are out and about. Whilst those ladies who remain indoors are shedding hairpins, from boudoir to drawing-room, from kitchen to garret, at an alarming rate.

This represents London's waste in pencils for a month: a writing implement nine feet long and proportionately thick.

Then, too, we know how even mere man makes use of his wife's or sister's stock for various purposes, as, for, instance, cleaning out his pipe, a substitute for cycling trouser-clips, a neat hook for carrying a parcel, buttoning his boots and gloves, and many other little duties for which the article was never intended. Is it a wonder that hairpins get lost?

A man once made a bet with another that he would pick up a hundred hairpins in as many yards whilst taking an early morning stroll in Regent Street. And he won. Anybody who doubts this may prove it to be possible by following the same plan in the same place early in the morning before the pavements have been swept.

It may be regarded as an exaggeration when the statement is read that more than five millions of hairpins are lost, and therefore wasted, within the confines of Greater London every day—thirty-five millions per week. This quantity would be sufficient, when bulked, to construct one gigantic hairpin 23 feet in length, and wide enough at the base to allow a cyclist to ride through.

Nobody ever uses a pencil more than within an inch or two of the end — a "stump" is always left. What becomes of this "stump" —of millions of them? They are thrown away, or left to lie in desks and drawers. All these are wasted material, which, were all the "stumps" collected together and formed into a whole, would in a month's time, represent a big pencil 9 feet long and having a proportionate diameter.

We live in a generation of hygiene. If there is any truth in the old proverb, the Briton should be nearer a state of heavenly perfection than most of his neighbours. We are almost always scrubbing something, from early morn till dewy eve.

The modern bathroom does not, as a rule, provide accommodation for more than one person and a piece of soap, but one feels all right so long as the latter is there. An Englishman never grudges the use of that toilet requisite. The more he uses, the cleaner he imagines himself to be. Of course, the waste-pipe and the sewer claim a great deal more than the man, but that doesn't matter to him.

In a city where nearly all the male inhabitants smoke, the consumption of matches must be enormous. Then there are the various other calls for "a light" in household, store, and street. Thousands of boxes of "wax" vestas are consumed daily. In spite of their cheapness, too, it is surprising how the value of the wasted material mounts up as box after box is emptied.

London's wasted vestas for a month would make a composition candle seventeen feet long and fifteen inches in diameter—considerably taller than a lamp-post.

The weight of the "wax" vestas in a penny box is about an ounce and a half. As a rule, only one-third of the match is consumed when used for its purpose; the remainder is thrown away into the gutter or elsewhere. This means an enormous waste of material — at least one ounce of "wax" and cotton is totally wasted in the case of every box of vestas emptied.

The mustard wasted in London every week would fill a cruet-bottle seven feet high.

Considering that millions of matches are lighted every twenty-four hours in London, it will hardly come as a surprise to readers to be informed that in a month the wastage of "wax" and cotton would suffice to build up a huge composition candle 17 feet long and almost 15 inches in diameter.

The wastage of material in the case of the consumption of wooden matches is perhaps not so striking; still, it is by no means insignificant. The long wooden matches, beloved of housekeepers owing to their cheapness, and hailing from Sweden and Belgium, are scarcely ever burnt more than a quarter of an inch from the top. The ingenious mathematician has calculated that, under the circumstances, a week's wastage of match timber is represented by a couple of pine banks 8 feet long.

When Sydney Smith was informed that an acquaintance of his was dead, he exhibited no signs of sorrow. On the contrary, he exclaimed: "Serve the fellow right; he always ate mustard with his mutton!" This act was a serious breach of epicurean etiquette.

The superstition is, of course, flouted by the mustard manufacturers. It runs away with a lot of profit. Was it not the founder of the celebrated Colman firm who declared that it was not the quantity of mustard that people ate, but what they wasted, that helped to make his fortune. Why shouldn't people eat mustard with mutton just as often as they use that condiment with any other kind of meat, if they like it?

But everybody eats mustard with beef. It is customary for the beef-eater to dab a great blob of the stuff on the side of his plate. He uses, perhaps, only a morsel of it in the course of his meal; the plate goes to the scullery, and the mustard goes down the sink.

So it happens that the accumulation of London's weekly waste of the fiery appetiser would fill a cruet bottle 7 feet in height!

A very serious waste goes on hour by hour all over the world. This is the gradual wearing away of gold and silver coins owing to friction. A similar process is also taking place in ornaments of precious metals. Bracelets, brooches, rings, etc., are liable to slow but sure waste in this way. The loss to the Mint from worn coin last year amounted to nearly £3000.

It has been worked out by the clever mathematician who has all the necessary figures at his finger-ends that in London alone the amount of this yearly waste under ordinary conditions—making allowance for the professional coin-sweaters' ill-gotten gains—may be represented by a "sovereign" 5 feet 9 inches in diameter.

The loss on gold and silver ornaments and coinage in London during a year may be represented by a "sovereign" as tall as a man.

"GOBBLES" OR THE BITER BIT.

Said the boy to the turkey:
"Now then, 'Gobbles,' don't be perky,
For it's Christmas, and you've got to do
your duty.
So unless you're jolly tough
We shall eat you right enough,
And father says he thinks you'll be a
beauty.
Come, don't look so distressed;
Think how nicely you'll be dressed
When Mary brings you in for Monday
dinner.
As my *jersey's* not too tight,
I shall wear it 'on the night';
You notice too, perhaps, I'm getting
thinner.

"It's for you, yes, all for you!
To-day is only Fri-day,
But soon it will be *my* day
For you, yes, all for you!"

FRIDAY

TUESDAY

Said the turkey to the lad:
"Well, my word, you *do* look bad;
And I'm certain that you've got the
'collywobbles';
For I'm sitting on your chest,
And I shall not let you rest;
I'll make you sorry that you ate poor
'Gobbles.'
Come, don't look so annoyed;
For you know that you enjoyed
Our interview on Monday at the table.
Though this stuff to make you well
Has, I'll own, a sickly smell;
You've noticed too, perhaps, what's on
the label.

"It's for you, yes, *all* for you!
You've had your annual high-
day,
But now I think it's *my* day
For you, yes, all for you!"

Real Life Romances.

Readers are Invited to Submit Stories (which must be fully Authenticated as Regards Names and Dates) for this Feature. Payment is Made for Accepted Contributions.

The Grip in the Dark.

A NIGHTMARE AND ITS RESULT.

He leapt out of bed, struck a match . . and examined the room.

NOT far from one of the most flourishing seaports in Great Britain lies the quiet town of E. —. About a year ago its serenity was disturbed by a series of clever burglaries, planned and executed by a band of reckless ruffians, who managed for months to escape detection. In a quiet street of this sleepy town lived Tom Brenton, a young man of excitable temperament, and his wife, who, like many of her sex, was the victim of "weak nerves."

On the night of November 18th, there was a fierce storm of wind and rain. Moon and stars were invisible, and the consequent complete darkness added to the terrors of the night. Before retiring to rest on this particular night, Tom Brenton carefully fastened every window, bolted all the doors, and laid his heavy thorn stick ready in view of a possible visit from the "crib-crackers," the night being so favourable for their depredations.

About 2 a.m., Mrs. Brenton woke with a start. The darkness was so intense that she could not see even the window, which was straight in front of her. Suddenly she became aware of something or someone bending over her. Burglars! she thought, and with that she gave a scream of terror, which, however, was suppressed quickly at its beginning by a strong hand gripping her throat. Again she attempted to call out, but the mysterious hand gripped her with cruel firmness, and no sound could pass her throat. Slowly she felt herself being suffocated by her unseen enemy, until at last, between terror and want of breath, she passed into a dead faint.

After a time she came round, and discovered her husband sitting up in bed, trembling violently, and dragging at her arm, although he was asleep. She roused him, and told her terrible story. He leapt out of bed, struck a match, lit the gas, and examined the room. Not a thing was disturbed. The window was fastened, the door locked and bolted on the inside. No one was in the room.

Suddenly Tom was startled by a little scream from his wife: "Oh, Tom! there's blood on your hand." He looked, and saw smears of blood on his fingers. What did it mean? He looked at his wife in bewilderment, and then saw—heavens!—blood on her throat. In a moment the horrible truth flashed upon him. *He* was the invisible assailant. He, himself, had nearly throttled his own wife. It appeared that he had had an attack of nightmare. His wife was standing on the platform of a railway station, an express dashed through, her skirt was caught by the passing train, he sprang forward and dragged at her arm with his full strength. Her skirt was torn away, and—he awoke with a start, to find her by his side speaking to him. In the dream his fingers had accidentally gripped her throat—that was the only solution of the mystery—and they shuddered to think how the nightmare might have ended in a tragedy.

A Musical Burglar.

A GENTLEMAN occupying a pretty villa in a suburb of Hamburg, who for the sake of convenience shall be called Herr Schmitz, was awakened one night by strange and unwonted sounds proceeding from the room below his own.

What could it be? Herr Schmitz rubbed his eyes and essayed to banish the last traces of sleepiness in order to solve, if possible, the mystery.

Then he listened again, more carefully. Yes! there could be no mistake; the sounds issued from the piano in his drawing-room. But obviously the piano could not make music of its own accord.

Could the kitten have elected to sleep on the keys of the instrument, and then have suddenly wakened, thus striking the notes? Herr Schmitz had read of such things.

But, no! No kitten could provide such music as he was listening to at the moment. One thing was quite certain: his piano was being made use of by a thoroughly competent performer.

Hastily throwing on some clothes Herr Schmitz proceeded to the scene of action. The drawing-room door was open, and, peeping in, he saw to his immense surprise a ragged, disreputable individual seated before the piano and playing with all his heart. His skill and memory were remarkable. Selections from the "Messiah" were followed by other similar pieces, executed alike with admirable taste and feeling. The listener at the door stood entranced. Who was this talented and highly undesirable musician?

Suddenly, with a shrill discord the man broke off, and, throwing himself across the instrument, gave way to bitter weeping. Herr Schmitz, more mystified than before, and thinking this a suitable moment for interference, abruptly entered the room. The man, finding himself discovered, started up and prepared to escape.

"Not so, my friend," quoth Herr Schmitz, quietly shutting the door and standing with his back against it, "I must first hear why you have entered my house at this time of night, and made such good use, I must admit, of my piano?"

The burglar, for such he proved to be, taken aback by the calm demeanour of his interlocutor, confessed that, having only just come out of prison, and being absolutely destitute, he had broken into the house with the intention of taking whatever came to hand that he could turn to good account, but, seeing the piano, an old passion for music overwhelmed him, and, regardless of consequences, he had sat down to play, becoming so completely absorbed in the enjoyment of his art as to forget his hunger and peculiar situation.

"I was a good musician once," said he, "but I fell into bad company, and having spent all my money I at last yielded to the temptations of my companions and became what you see me now, a *thief!* As I told you to begin with, I am just set free from jail."

After some further conversation Herr Schmitz, touched with pity for the man's destitution and evident contrition, having provided for his immediate necessity, sent him forth with the promise of help in the future for the leading of an honest and respectable life.

He saw, to his immense surprise, a . . . disreputable individual seated before the piano.

A revolver-bullet whizzed past his ear, and he heard several shots fired at random.

Robbery!

A STORY OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

THE market was over. One by one farmers stepped into their gigs and drove home. Amos Mostyn turned and followed the example of the rest.

Amos was pleased with himself and the world in general, owing to the fact that he would take back with him heavier pockets than he had entered the town with in the morning. It was with his mind pleasantly occupied in going over his day's work that he drove towards home in the fast-fading light of the short winter's day.

He had left the town several miles behind, when he observed in front of him a woman toiling along. On nearing her he noticed that she carried a large bag, and seemed very poorly dressed. From her shambling walk Amos concluded that she was tired. He was about to draw up and offer her a seat beside him when she stopped, and he saw that she was closely veiled.

"Would you be so kind, mister, as to give me a lift?"

"Ay, ay!" said the farmer. "I'm going as far as Northley, if that will help you."

The woman proceeded to accept his offer; but just as she was putting her foot up on the step Amos started, for beneath her dress he saw plainly that she wore trousers.

His suspicions were aroused. Quick as thought, his brain formed a plan. Her bag was already in the trap, and the bogus "she" was on the point of following, when the farmer dropped his glove over the side and exclaimed, "There! I've dropped my glove. Would you mind just stepping back and getting it for me?"

The person obeyed, and, once clear of the trap, Amos gave old Primrose a cut with the whip which sent her along the road faster than she had troubled to go for many a day.

Not a moment too soon, either; for, with a yell, two men sprang from the hedge several yards in front and rushed towards the horse's head.

Amos slashed his whip frantically from side to side, and Primrose, scenting mischief, did her best, with the result that one man was knocked down, and the other received a cut across his face which effectually prevented him stopping the horse.

The farmer pressed the horse forward, setting his teeth and not daring to look back. A revolver-bullet whizzed past his ear, and he heard several shots fired at random.

On, on, tore Primrose, until the white gates of Mostyn Farm caused her master to draw rein.

Half-an-hour later, whilst relating his adventure to the family circle, a maid entered the room with a large black bag.

"Please, sir, Williams says you left this in the trap," and she put it down and left the room.

Amos Mostyn left the tea-table, and, opening the bag, gingerly lifted out a revolver. It was six-chambered, and fully loaded.

"If any confirmation of my story were needed," he said, "here it is. Thank Heaven, I have escaped from highway robbery in the twentieth century."

A Desperate Climb.

HOW TWO MEN SAVED A TRAIN FROM DESTRUCTION.

NEAR Bray Head, in Dublin, the train runs along a precipitous cliff from Bray to Wicklow. This is an extremely dangerous part of the line, as the track curves on emerging from the tunnel, and were there any obstacle in the way, the train would not have time to stop before being hurled into the sea about forty or fifty feet below. Only about three feet lies between the edge of the cliff and train. Is it a wonder that people feel nervous when the train reaches this spot, and breathe a sigh of relief when the danger is past?

From the railway the precipice again rises about 150 feet, and on top of this is a walk. Two gentlemen and their mother were one day strolling along this walk, engaged in conversation. It was just about time for the train to pass, and they were waiting to have a view of it winding like a serpent halfway down the cliff.

A railing was being erected along the edge of the cliff, and a number of iron bars were lying about. One of the gentlemen, in moving, hit one of them by accident with his foot, when, to his horror, it slipped over the edge and went sliding down the cliff. They watched it for a moment of breathless anxiety, hoping it would continue its journey into the sea. To their horror it stopped, and lay right across the line. At this moment the sound of a shrill whistle, as the train entered the tunnel, reached the ears of the party.

For a moment the gentlemen stood in horrible perplexity. To go down that precipice seemed certain destruction, but the thought of hundreds of people coming along in total ignorance of the awful fate that awaited them put an end to their hesitation, and with a word of encouragement to their mother, they started on their perilous descent.

Down they went, slipping and sliding, with all the speed they could muster. At last one of them got into such a position that he could go no further. The other (who had caused the bar to fall) suddenly slipped down on his back, and felt his legs dangling into space. To get back without help was an impossibility. He lay there for one terrible second, not knowing what depth of a fall lay beneath him.

Then the rumble of the approaching train brought back to him the thought of the impending calamity.

With a muttered prayer he let go his hold to fall into space.

Much to his own amazement he landed without being hurt, after a fall of about fourteen feet, and springing up he flew down the remaining distance, just in time to hurl the bar into the sea and jump back as the train dashed past with its freight of human beings, who little dreamed how narrowly they had escaped the jaws of death.

Thus ended what might easily have proved a serious calamity.

The courage and nerve of the two gentlemen in the unusual circumstances in which they found themselves is worthy of the highest praise. Not everyone would have displayed their pluck and promptitude.

Down they went . . . with all the speed they could muster.

Among Dead Kings.

A ROMANCE OF WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

WESTMINSTER ABBEY, tall, stately, gloomy, with the light filtering through its many stained-glass windows, and an air of grandeur pervading every corner, is the scene of this incident.

Beneath the Abbey lies a cloister that in bygone centuries formed the burial ground of early kings. Into this a certain young man found his way one morning. Fascinated by the extreme age of the place, its solemn quietness, he wandered from tomb to tomb, pausing before each to read the inscription, and endeavouring to recall the lingering remembrances of their histories.

At last he paused, and, taking out his watch, glanced at the time. One o'clock! He moved hastily towards the swinging doors through which he had entered the cloister. Passing on, another door loomed dimly before him. He pushed against it. It did not yield. A cold fear filled him. Again he leaned his weight against the worm-worn oak. Doubt now became certainty. The door had been locked. He was a prisoner in the vault.

An hour passed. It seemed an age. Hunger began to pinch him. Then a horrible fear crept in his mind. What if the vaults were opened only at rare intervals? This was his first visit to the Abbey, and he knew nothing of its customs.

A dull rumble reached him from overhead. He pictured the crowded traffic, streaming down Whitehall, and the stately Houses of Parliament, looming beside the Thames.

Again the man sprang to the door.

That was life. All about lay death. For him, unless help came—a starving death! Perhaps, some months hence, a janitor would wander down to these parts and there find him dead—buried among kings.

The light in the cloister became fainter. Dusk began to fall. His nails torn and fingers rent with splinters, the imprisoned man paused in his vain fight for freedom. A sound fell on his ears. Hollow and echoing from pillar to pillar it drew near. Someone was approaching.

Again the man sprang to the door, and again his maddened cries rang loudly in the cloister.

Then he paused, listening expectantly. The footsteps sounded more faintly. His cries had not been heard.

"Help, help!" his voice coursed feebly down the cloisters.

But the footsteps never faltered.

* * *

The janitor paused, as with his hand on the key, he was about to close the cloister for the night. Was that a voice he heard? He listened intently. A hollow-echo, half-human, fell upon his ears. An ominous silence followed.

With feverish haste the man returned to the cloister. His key grated in the ancient lock, and the light from his lamp fell on the outstretched form of a man—senseless, but breathing feebly.

It was some days before the hero of this incident was able to leave his bed. And had the janitor come an hour later, the imprisoned man would inevitably have lost his reason. As it was, he long felt the shock of his terrible experience in the cloister of Westminster Abbey.

Blind Gaffer's Christmas Stocking

How the Generosity of Two Children was Rewarded.

By May Creagh Henry.

"Tatties, Nance," exclaimed a small boy, ragged and barefooted, as he burst into the garret with two large baked potatoes.

"Oh, Dan, how lovely!" exclaimed his small, equally ragged sister, clapping her hands.

"And milk—and bread."

"All for to-night?"

"Yes, and a bundle of wood to hot the potatoes with."

"My! Wot's you been doing to-day, Dan?"

"Sold out all my papers right away—then I carried a bag for a gent—tuppence. Showed a lady the way to the tuppenny tube—penny. Fetched a little dog out of the traffic at Piccadilly Circus for an old lady—threepence! Ain't that luck? And when we've had our supper I'm going out again to shop for to-morrow."

The two children kindled a fire with a handful of sticks and a small remnant of coal, then sat contentedly on the floor to watch the heating of their potatoes.

Presently Nancy sidled up to Dan and laid her fair head on his shoulder.

"Dan," she said, "I want someting more than anyfing in the world!"

"What's that, Nance?"

It was Dan's business in life to see that Nancy had everything she wanted, if his untiring energy and ingenuity could procure it. Fortunately, Nancy understood the situation, with the understanding of six short years, and refrained from asking what she thought might be unattainable.

"To-morrow's Christmas Day!"

"Yes," said Dan sadly, thinking of the last Christmas they had spent in that little attic under the eaves, when their mother was alive. How merry they had all been then over the scant fare that did duty for a Christmas dinner.

"Well, Dan, what I want is a Christmas stocking!"

Dan scratched his curly head and looked troubled.

"Don't you think I can have one, Dan?" asked Nance, after a short silence. "Don't you think Father Christmas could climb up all these stairs? P'raps he doesn't go to attics!" she added, with a little sigh.

Now, Dan was not certain in his mind whether such a person as Father Christmas really existed. At the age of thirteen, credulity in youthful tradition is apt to totter. Even *should* he exist, the boy felt dubious as to his agility in ascending to the two-pair back, where Dan and his sister lived in Slattery Court. But Nancy's feelings must be spared, so again he scratched his head and pondered.

"I won't cry if I can't have one, Dan," Nancy volunteered heroically.

Dan rewarded her with a sounding kiss.

"What do you fink?" she asked.

He saw only one solution, and smiled rather sorrowfully.

"I'm afraid you can't have one, little Nance, because—because, you see, we've got no stocking to hang up!"

Nancy ruefully surveyed her little bare feet.

"Then it wouldn't be any use for Father Christmas to come," she murmured.

Though Nancy kept her promise her blue eyes were full of tears.

"Mammy *would* be sorry," she said presently.

That was too much for Dan; he there and then made up his mind that Nancy *should* have a stocking, cost what it might.

"I've got it!" he cried suddenly. "Old Gaffer! I'll go and ask Blind Gaffer to lend us one of his."

"Do you dare, Dan? He's so cross. He frightens me."

"I've led him home many a time. I don't care if he *is* cross, I'm not frightened. Watch the tatties, Nance, till I come back."

With a cheery nod and smile Dan went whistling down the crazy stairs; but in spite of his bold assertion, his heart beat considerably faster, as he reached the door on the floor below.

"Blind Gaffer" was well known and universally feared by the children in Slattery Court. His words were hard, his stick was harder, and, in spite of his blindness, he aimed true in his wrath.

A weak, querulous voice cried, "Come in," and Dan entered the room. Its occupant was lying on the low, pallet bed, his sightless eyes turned towards the intruder. A candle guttered on a broken chair beside the bed.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" he inquired in a hollow voice. Dan scarcely recognised in the emaciated figure the burly professional beggar, with a red face, and a voice, which when used unprofessionally, was loud and harsh. Now his face was ghastly white, his voice weak, with a note of the professional whine.

The boy closed the door.

"I'm Dan," he said. "Are you ill, Mr. Gaffer?"

"Why else d'you suppose I'm lying here, you young fool? You knew I was ill, or you wouldn't have dared come to plague me. What do you want?"

"I—I—it's for Nance," Dan stammered, hardly knowing how to frame his strange request.

"What's for Nance? You've come here to steal. I know you."

Dan flushed scarlet.

"Have I ever taken a penny from you, Blind Gaffer?" he said indignantly.

"Well, what is it? What is it?"

"I came to ask if you'd lend us a stocking."

"A stocking?" the old man snarled. "A stocking! A likely story. A stocking!"

As he repeated the word his tone suddenly changed from scorn to suspicion. He raised himself in his bed.

"Nancy wanted a stocking to hang up for Father Christmas, because to-night's Christmas Eve."

The old man sank back evidently relieved.

"What's the good of hanging up a stocking?" growled Gaffer.

"For Father Christmas to fill. At least, I'm not quite sure there *is* such a person, but *I* meant to fill it if he didn't."

"You meant to fill it, did you? What with?"

"Well, I'm afraid there's not much, but Nancy wouldn't mind. I was going to buy an orange, and I've got a dead sparrow, and a tin with a stone in it, and a broken ball I picked up in the park."

Blind Gaffer was silent for a time. Presently he said:

"Why don't you use your own stockings?"

"We ain't got none, Mr. Gaffer, neither Nance nor me."

This statement was unanswerable.

Dan stood and waited in silence. Blind Gaffer had forgotten his existence, groaning with sudden pain.

The boy approached the bed.

"Can I do anything for you?" he said gently.

"No one can't do anything for me, and no one wants to. I've lain here three days without a morsel of food or drink, and I shall lie here till I die."

"Wait a bit, Gaffer, I'll fetch you something," cried Dan. He ran out of the room, and, taking the stairs two at a time, reached his own little attic.

"Got the stocking, Dan?" cried Nancy as he entered.

"No; Blind Gaffer's ill, Nance, and hungry. I'm going to take him my tattie."

"But *you're* hungry, too, Dan!" remonstrated Nancy.

"Not very, Nance. I'll be back directly," and before Nancy could enter any more protests Dan had snatched up the hot potato, and was off again. Outside Blind Gaffer's door he stood for a moment, and furtively inhaled the delicious, comforting smell of baked potato—then he resolutely entered the room with his offering.

"It's only me again, Dan," he explained. "We are having baked potatoes for supper to-night, Mr. Gaffer, so I thought p'raps you might like one all hot."

"How d'you suppose a dying man's going to eat a potato?" Blind Gaffer said peevishly.

"Then you won't have it?" In spite of his own pangs of hunger, Dan felt genuinely sorry that the old man should refuse his gift.

"I want something to drink — give me something to drink."

"Would you like a drop of milk, Gaffer?"

"Yes—yes—fetch me some milk."

Once more Dan climbed the stairs to his attic, but not so gaily now, for the milk was Nancy's, and to think that she should go without was far worse than going without himself. Still, Gaffer was old and blind, and undoubtedly very ill, and he needed it, Dan argued, so he said:

"Nancy, dear, Gaffer wants a little milk. Could you spare him some? He can't eat."

"Yes, Dan, all of it; I've got my lovely tattie."

"Then you take it down to him, there's a good girl. I'm coming in a minute, when I've lit the dip."

So Nancy went down with her little mug of milk to Blind Gaffer's room.

She knocked at the door timidly.

"Come in, come in; what's the use of standing there knocking? Is it you again, you little limb?"

"It's Nancy, Mr. Gaffer—Dan's sister—and I've brought you my milk, because Dan thinks you'd like it."

"Quick, quick, child, give me a drink!"

Nancy handed him the mug; the old man drank greedily.

"Ah! Give me some more!" he said, holding out the mug.

"That's all we've got—that and two tatties."

"Potatoes? The boy brought me one just now."

"Yes, that was Dan's."

"His supper?"

"Yes; but he said you wanted it much more 'n him."

Blind Gaffer was silent. Nancy wondered what his dim, bleared eyes saw in their sightless stare, and watched his face with an undefined fear, which made her heart beat faster, so that when Dan came back she ran to him, and slipped her little hand in his, and held it fast.

"We'll go now, Mr. Gaffer," the boy said; "if we can't do anything for you."

"You might stay awhile — I'm lone-some!" Blind Gaffer said with a new note of appeal in his weak voice.

So the children sat beside the bed, and looked at their strange host with wide-eyed childish pity.

"Whom do you belong to?" the old man asked presently.

"No one 'cept each other," Dan answered.

"I belong to Dan," Nancy vouchsafed, sidling up to her brother.

"No parents?"

"Mother died sudden, in hospital, ten months ago, runned over by a 'bus, and father

So the children sat beside the bed, and looked at their strange host with wide-eyed childish pity.

died when Nancy was a baby," said Dan with unconscious pathos.

"Why don't you talk cockney like the other kids?"

"Mother never let us talk to any of them. She said we must grow up fit to live with grandmama, who we was to go to some day."

"Where is she?"

"A long way off in a place called Yorkshire—right away from London or any town, in a lovely farmhouse. Mother cried when she talked about it. She told me that I must take Nancy there some day."

"Dan is goin' to grow into a big man quickly, and make enough money to take us," chimed in Nancy.

That wonderful journey to grandmama and the farmhouse was the staple subject of conversation between the children, and many were the plans they had made and the means they had devised to grow rich.

"How do you live now?" inquired Blind Gaffer.

"Sellin' papers," said Dan, and he added cheerfully, "I generally manage to pick up a few extra coppers most days, doing odd jobs."

"You've fed me home sometimes. I never gave you nothing."

"I didn't do that for money, Mr. Gaffer."

The old man lay for some time without speaking; his mind seemed to be wandering again, and the children remained silent.

Presently Nancy whispered she was hungry, and Dan told her to run up and eat her supper, promising to follow soon.

"Give me a drink," Blind Gaffer said presently, when Nancy had gone. Dan found a jug of water on the table and gave him some.

"Did you say Yorkshire you were going to? I'm a Yorkshireman meself; it won't be long before I go home."

"Are you going there, Mr. Gaffer?"

"No, no, I'm going further than that—much further."

"You'll not be strong enough just yet," said the boy.

"What are those bells, lad?"

A peal of bells rang out cheerily.

"I think it's for Christmas."

"Is it Christmas Day?" inquired the old man.

"No, that's to-morrow. It's Christmas Eve; that's why I came to ask you to lend us a stocking, for Nancy to hang up."

"I forgot—yes—yes—that's what the children did when I was a boy—away in Yorkshire—I remember now. When are you going there, lad? They'd make a sturdy Yorkshireman of you."

"When I've saved enough money for the railway to take us, perhaps in a year or two."

"Yes—yes, you count by years. I count by hours now. Make a better shot at life than I've done, lad, but a blind man ain't got such a very great chance. I've been 'ard—maybe that was because I wasn't 'appy. You shall start better'n I did."

The old man passed a trembling hand across his cold, damp forehead.

"What was it I wanted to say? What did you come for? Ah! yes, o' course, the stocking, and to-morrow's Christmas Day. Turn up the mattress, at the foot of the bed, you'll find it there—to the right."

Dan did as Blind Gaffer bade him.

"Have you found it, lad—be quick?"

"Yes, Gaffer, but it's got something in it."

"Take it as it is, and keep it. Father Christmas filled it." The ghost of a smile illuminated Blind Gaffer's face. "He filled it for *me*, but I shan't open it to-morrow. Take it, lad, and go—go."

Dan's face flushed with excitement and joy. Nancy would have her stocking after all, and full, and heavy.

"Thank you, Mr. Gaffer, thank you ever so. I believe you must be a Father Christmas yourself. Good-night, and a happy Christmas to you, Mr. Gaffer."

The old man's eyes had closed, and he lay very still. Dan crept out of the room on tip-toe.

That night Dan hung the stocking at the end of Nancy's bed.

The next morning Dan was awakened by an unfamiliar sound. It was the ring of coins on the bare boards. Nancy, creeping to the foot of her bed at daybreak, had found the stocking. The first thing she drew from it was a little paper package, which she forthwith proceeded to examine. In her excitement some of the contents fell on the floor.

"Dan," she cried, "white pennies, look!"

Dan was soon by her side. The white pennies were half-crowns. The stocking was full of such packages, some containing shillings, some florins, some half-crowns, and some, carefully stowed away in the foot, sovereigns and half-sovereigns. These were the savings of a long and profitably misspent life, proving how many soft and generous hearts pass by one small street corner, enough to make a poor man rich. Dan felt that there must be some mistake—he would go and speak to old Gaffer about it. Nancy

did not see what Gaffer had to do with anything except the stocking; but Dan explained with a kiss that girls did not understand that sort of thing, and left her playing contentedly with the silver and the gold.

No sooner had he closed the rickety door behind him, than he heard the sound of many persons on the landing below. He descended and joined the crowd round the door, at which stood a powerful constable—they had to be powerful in those parts. A police sergeant was inside the room. Someone told Dan that Blind Gaffer was dead. The news came as a shock to him, and his eyes filled with tears. A rough factory girl was quick to notice his emotion.

"What was 'e to you any'ow? No cause for you to blubber, is there?"

"He was very kind to me," Dan said gently.

"Yah! Blind Gaffer kind, oo' are you kiddin'?" growled a ruffianly-looking man roughly thrusting Dan aside with his elbow. The man had been drinking, and, like some others present, appeared muchchagrined to find the police before him. Blind Gaffer had the reputation of being a miser, so a constable had reported the old man's absence from his accustomed pitch, and the inspector, knowing the character of the neighbourhood, had instructed a couple of policemen to make inquiries.

"I wanted to tell you that Blind Gaffer had money—a lot of it!"

"Now, my good man, you just leave that boy alone," said the constable.

The sergeant came out of the room, locking the door behind him.

"They seem to have been before us, after all," said he to his comrade in tones loud enough to be overheard.

"Either that or there was no hoard—there's none there now, nothing but a dead man—a stick or two of furniture that may come in 'andy for firewood, an embossed 'Robinson Crusoe,' from which he used to pretend to spell out texts—and a bit of board with some lies painted on it."

The crowd showed distinct signs of disappointment.

"Now you had better all be off, all of you," the sergeant continued, directly addressing them. "I don't know whether you've got anything or whether you 'aven't, but anyhow there's nothing more to come."

The crowd quickly melted away.

"You'd better be off, too," said the constable to Dan, who still lingered.

"I wanted to tell you that Blind Gaffer had money—a lot of it!"

"Oh! and how do you know?"

"Because I have it. If you will come upstairs I will show it to you."

The sergeant followed the boy.

On the stairs Dan stopped.

"Do you mind if I go in first? I've a little sister and she might be frightened if she saw you."

"You don't appear to 'ave a big brother, or a father, or anything of that sort!"

"No, only Nancy. Mother died nearly a year ago, and since then Nancy and I have lived all alone."

"You must leave the door open so that I can hear what you say to your sister."

Dan entered and the sergeant heard his reassuring statements to Nancy. In a moment the boy called to him to come in, and

he entered the tiny garret. Nancy was sitting up in bed, the miserable coverlet before her all but hidden beneath the silver and gold coins.

"Whew! And how did you come by all this?"

"Old Gaffer gave it to me last night."

"He only gave the stocking," explained Nancy. "It was Father Christmas who filled it."

Dan winked meaningly at the sergeant.

"Nancy means that Father Christmas put the money into old Gaffer's stocking, and that old Gaffer gave the stocking and the money to me."

"It sounds like a fairy tale," said the man.

"All Father Christmas stories are fairy tales, aren't they?"

The sergeant felt that he was getting out of his depth.

"Let's hope this won't prove one too," said he. "Now, tell me all about it," he added.

The boy told his story, and the sergeant took it down. When Dan had finished he said:

"Well, my lad, if you have told the truth you'll be all right."

"Dan always tells the truth," cried Nancy indignantly.

"I'm sure I hope so," said the sergeant. "Meanwhile," he continued, "I shall have to take the money with me to the station for safety. It would never do to leave it here. And we'd better wrap it up again in the paper—this ain't a district to rattle your money in."

The sergeant and Dan sat on Nancy's bed, and all three were soon making the money up into little parcels again. Some of these the sergeant put into his pockets, others he packed into his helmet. Then, with a friendly nod and smile, he took his departure.

After he left, the two children sat in the garret, bewildered by the strange doings of the last few hours. Dan was manfully striving to reconcile Nancy to the loss of the white pennies when another visitor arrived.

The superintendent at the police-station was as kindly as he was shrewd. On hearing the sergeant's tale he felt that he must place the children in safety, so he rang up a police-court missionary, and arranged that he should look after the children.

They had a Christmas dinner such as they had never dreamed of, in a comfortable home with many other happy children.

An inquest there was, and Dan gave evidence. His story received corroboration from the doctor, and the examination of the dead man's room quite satisfied the coroner. The case got into the papers, and the court caused copies to be circulated throughout Yorkshire. One of these copies reached the hands of an old lady as she sat alone, brooding over the past by the fire in the sitting-room of a comfortable farmhouse. It was the first she had heard of her daughter's death—the daughter who had married against her will, and had been lost to her for so many years. The one Nancy had passed beyond the reach of her forgiveness, but the other Nancy had come within the reach of her love . . .

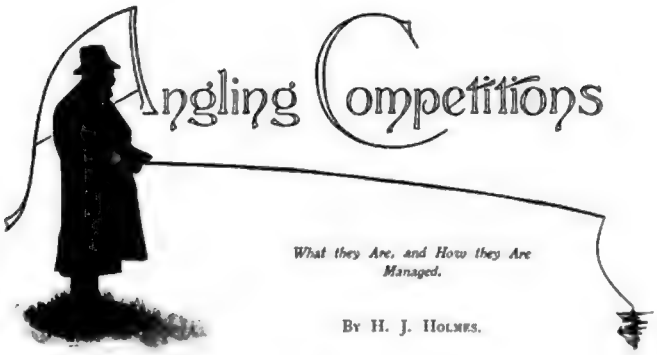
And with the coming of the children a new joy has awakened in the lonely woman's heart and a new light of happiness is in her eyes, as she watches little Nancy making daisy chains on the old lawn, or hears her happy laughter as Dan swings her high among the blossoms in the orchard. And when Christmas Eve comes round there hangs at the bottom of Nancy's bed a shabby old worsted stocking, the stocking that brought the luck.

TO DOROTHY:

Together with a Fan.

Dare I to tell how, when seeking some small token
Of friendship true, this did my fancy take?
Remembrances of all the hearts you've broken,
Of all the hearts that you intend to break,
This bid me choose. The men I would befriend.
Hearts broken once are difficult to mend.
Your winning smile to hide, this fan I send.

Lawrence Nelson.



Angling Competitions

What they Are, and How they Are Managed.

By H. J. Holmes.

The enthusiastic angler has been described as a man who catches fish, eats fish, talks fish, thinks fish, and almost drinks fish. Fish is a ruling passion with him

In recent times, angling competitions, in both river and sea, have become very big things indeed. In November last year, for instance, one was held on the Thames at Windsor. Although a dense fog prevailing in London deterred many from attending, some 450 were present.

As most of these accounted for takes, more or less heavy, old Father Thames must have lost a good many of his denizens on that particular occasion. Between half-past ten and half-past four the winner of the competition captured 7lb. 3¼oz. of fish, while the lowest weight to take a prize was 7½oz.

Sea-angling, of course, provides better scope for large takes. At the 1903 annual carnival of the British Sea-Anglers' Society (a London institution, with a membership of 1200 ardent fishermen), the total weight of fish captured amounted to no less than 2½ tons! The largest "take" was 81 lb. 10 oz. One competitor secured a couple of congers, weighing, by a coincidence, 29lb. each.

During the season, hundreds of these competitions take place all over the United Kingdom. Sometimes, as in the case of Deal, or Hastings and St. Leonards, they are spread over a period of three or four days. There are many seaside and riverside angling resorts whose inhabitants bless the enthusiasm that led to the establishment of these popular fishing functions in their midst.

It has been calculated by one who ought to know that a certain Kentish town has its exchequer swollen to the extent of £1000 as the proceeds of a single angling tournament held there! Angling, of course, is by no means an expensive pastime individually. Still, when, say, three or four hundred healthy fishermen — with appetites whetted by the sea air, and a collective thirst accentuated by the earnest spinning of yarns of former exploits —invade a town for three or four days on end, some money is bound to be spent.

Competitors waiting to have their tickets stamped.

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There is a story told of a town which was eaten out of its entire stock of meat on the first day of an angling carnival, and for the next two days there was nothing to be had for the dinner-tables but the fish caught by the visitors.

River angling competitions, when there happens to be a large number of entries, require careful organisation. In the great Windsor contest already referred to, a stretch of river four miles in length was covered by the competitors. The boundaries were from the Brocas Meadows to Lord Fitzgerald's Fence.

The four hundred and fifty assembled at the George Hotel, where the competition officials stamped tickets (issued previously on application). Thence the crowd proceeded to Brocas Meadows, there to await the signal to start. This was given at 10.30, when each competitor proceeded to their "swims" on foot—cycles, motors, or any other means of locomotion not being allowed. Any competitor found retaining a "swim," or having one retained for him, would have been disqualified; so it is a case of "every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" the moment the signal is given.

All the fish in season were allowed for except pike, pope, bleak, minnows, and eels. Live bait or spinning for perch was prohibited. Captured fish had to be of the legalised Thames measurement. No competitor was allowed to fish within ten yards of another, unless with mutual consent, and only one rod was permitted for each man.

At 4.30 fishing ceased, and the weighing-in started at five o'clock, with the result already described.

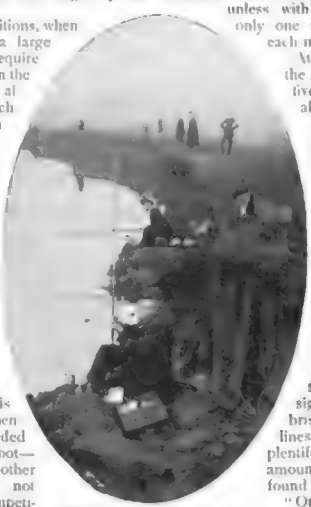
Sea-angling competitions have two phases: from pier or from boats. The latter attracts the larger number of entries, as better sport is to be obtained afloat.

As in river contests, the competitors start at a certain hour and "knock off" strictly to time-table.

The pier of a seaside resort, with an angling competition in full swing, is an interesting sight, the ironwork simply bristling with rods and lines. When fish are fairly plentiful, there is an immense amount of amusement to be found by the onlooker.

"One rod, one competitor," is the rule, and a certain number of hooks—three or four—must only be used. A minimum is fixed as to the size of the fish captured and eligible for weighing-in.

In fishing from boats, the angler is allowed to employ one boatman, who may bait the



Some of the competitors at a river competition at Windsor, fishing

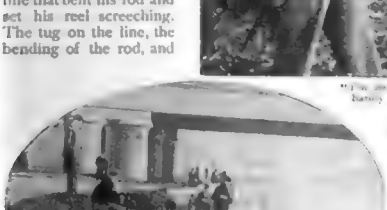
A large concourse of competitors in an angling competition awaiting the signal to start.

hooks, gaff, net, and generally make himself useful, except by fishing on his own account. The rules as to time, etc., are practically the same as in river and pier events.

It is hardly necessary to state that angling competitions are often productive of excitement and amusement, and many a strange haul has been made from river and sea.

An enthusiastic recruit to the art was angling from a punt only for a few moments when he felt a vicious tug at his line that bent his rod and set his reel screeching. The tug on the line, the bending of the rod, and

"I've got a beauty, a beauty, a beauty!"



Several competitors in an angling competition fishing.

the screeching, whirring reel were too much for him, and, giving a spasmodic leap, he cleared the punt and landed feet first at the bottom of the river, which was, fortunately, only five feet deep at the spot. The cold water calmed his nerves at once, and, being a six-footer, he simply elevated his chin and arms, and in his own fashion began to manipulate the rod and reel. The fish began to leap and run; and the angler, in his extraordinary and somewhat undignified position, turned his head towards his neighbour's boat to ask advice as to the proper way to hand[illegible] fish.

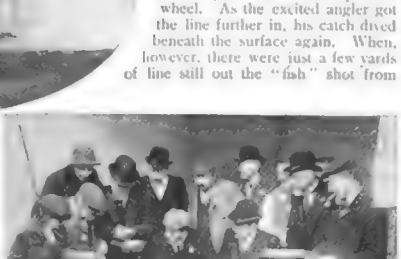
But the boat seemed empty.

His friend had simply rowed off his seat and was [illegible] with laughter at the other's plight.

However, the competitor captured his fish. He was a little disgusted to find that he had risked his life for a 2½lb. pike.

In a certain coast event last autumn a fisherman had a rather exciting experience. He was fishing from a boat in about twenty feet of water, and on beginning to haul in his line he felt a very peculiar and unusual movement at the end of it. His capture rose to the surface some little distance away and thrashed the water into foam all around.

There were what looked like large arms going round like windmills, and the creature itself was whirling about like a small paddle-wheel. As the excited angler got the line further in, his catch dived beneath the surface again. When, however, there were just a few yards of line still out the "fish" shot from



A dispute during the weighing. This is an operation involving great care.

below into the air right into the face of the fisherman!

Then he realised that he had hooked a specimen of the Great Northern Diver. The man was nearly knocked overboard by its furious onslaught, and at first could do little more than defend himself. In one of its dashes his assailant split the back of his hand open. In another it struck him above the eye with its beak, inflicting a wound two inches long and laying bare the bone.

The maddened bird made no attempt to escape, but whirled round, striking viciously at its capturer's face and eyes. It continued its fierce attack on the angler, till at last he managed to strike it a lucky blow with a boat-stretcher, which broke a wing, and he was then able to dispatch it.

The angler, who was bleeding profusely, had to be attended by a doctor, who found it necessary to put four stitches into the wound on his forehead.

The diver measured over three feet across, and on being cut open it was found to have swallowed a small whiting which had been on the hook. Probably the wriggling of the fish caught the keen eye of the diver which must have plunged nearly twenty feet under water to seize its prey, with so unpleasant a result.

Sea-angling from the pier. 8.45 a.m. Drawing numbers for choice of places

Competitors on the pier. The competition in full swing.

A story about a fish that tried to swallow a bird was recently on its rounds in angling circles. Its truth, however, cannot be guaranteed. It appears that a toiling fisherman was flogging some preserved water with a fly to try and ensnare the wily trout, which ran large in that particular stream. It was a dull day, and the swallows were flying low. Suddenly the angler saw a tremendous commotion, and one swallow had disappeared—"swallowed," in fact, by a big trout.

The story has a sequel.

The angler, as soon as he had recovered from his amazement at the strange sight of a fish bolting a swallow, went on with his work. In half an hour he caught a magnificent trout. On opening its mouth to remove the fly out flew the swallow! In his surprise the angler dropped the trout, which got safely away to its native element.

This part of the story having been told to a friend by the angler concerned, the former remarked drily that he supposed "the swallow came back to build in the same fish's mouth next year." "No sir," was the reply. "I caught the very same trout next day by using an artificial swallow, that I had taken from one of my wife's old hats, for a bait!"

There was in an angling competition, held not so very long ago, a certain fisherman who had made himself very much disliked owing to his arrogant and supercilious manner among his brethren of the rod. He was a most inconceivable boaster, and had actually invited his *fiancée* to come and look on and admire his prowess. Whilst he was entertaining the lady on the river-bank a trout

Fishing from boats. Search for illegal tackle by committeemen.

began disporting itself in the stream, gleaming in the sunshine.

"Oh, catch that fish, darling," said the fair one; "do now, just to please me."

"Easily done, my dear. Just wait a bit." In his usual hectoring, supercilious manner, he asked a countryman standing near to get him a live bait or two.

One was soon forthcoming, and the angler, eager to shine in the eyes of his lady love, prepared his line.

At twelve o'clock he left the rod with the little cork float bobbing in the side eddy in the stream, and went off with the lady to lunch.

The temptation was too great for one who remained behind. One was dispatched to the village at top speed, and soon returned with a couple of large red herrings. The absent one's rod was pulled up, the herrings attached to the hooks, and the rod replaced in its former position.

The happy pair duly returned.

"Oh, darling," cried the lady. "See! your float has gone!"

"It's the trout, my dear!" he exclaimed. "Just stand back a moment and you'll see."

A bold stroke, a few moment's play, which was invented for show; then the two red herrings were grassed!

Everybody roared at the braggart's discomfiture.

Ready for launching at 9 a.m.

It is said that the engagement was broken off after that. At any rate, the bumptious one is now a little more subdued.

The most remarkable angling competition ever held took place in August last at Chatellerault, on the Vienne.

By 2 a.m. a procession formed at the Town Hall. Towards 3, the Mayor, the Corporation, the local gymnastic society, the Harmony of Chatellerault, bearing a standard which was one mass of medals and other trophies, 300 local fishermen,

Anglers at sea. The boatmen are cutting up the bait

Each catch being weighed in bulk by the judges. The winner of the biggest catch of the day, and his catch—two huge cod.

and all Chatellerault behind, marched to the station, the bugles sounding.

The train from Paris drew up, bringing nearly 2000 competitors in the great contest, laden with rods, nets, tackle, and baskets large enough to hold dozens of monster carp and bream.

The bugles rang out, the "Marsellaise" was sung in chorus, the Deputy-Mayor made a speech. At 4 a.m. the increased procession, to double-quick time sounded by the gymnastic society's trumpets, hastened to the river. All the ladies of Chatellerault were already up and dressed in their best to cheer the gallant sportsmen. The spectacle of the wonderful procession drew forth cries of joy from the bystanders. Two thousand rods moved onward to water.

At the bandstand on the public square lots were drawn for places on the river banks, previously marked by stakes, along a distance of nearly four miles.

By half-past seven 10,000 had gathered to watch the contest. A few minutes before eight a bugle sounded—"To your rods." At eight precisely another blast gave the signal for "Go!" and the lines were flung. During two hours the excitement never flagged. At every haul a wild cheer from ten thousand voices proclaimed a fresh capture.

The biggest catch of the day.

At ten o'clock the bugle sounded "Cease fishing," and, the procession reforming and accompanied by wild fanfares on trumpet and bugle, marched to the Town Hall, where the contents of two thousand baskets were solemnly weighed and checked by the judges.

Banquet, speeches, and a grand ball followed the contest.

An angling competition seems to be one of those things which they "do" better in France!

As showing the strange tastes some fish have for bait and food, a certain City enthusiast relates an experience that he had during a competition in which he took part. In the noontide heat of early autumn he was quietly nibbling his lunch by the riverside while keeping a wary eye on his float.

His repast consisted of a portion of a dish of cold fried steak and onions. As he ate, a few bits of onion dropped into the stream, and he was very much interested to see a good sized tench come up and devour the morsels, although it evidently scorned the angler's more orthodox lures on the hook.

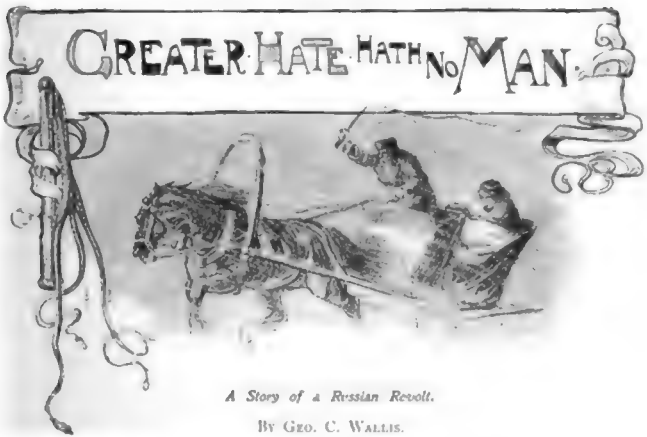
Now the strange part of the story comes. Three days afterwards the fisherman happened to be trying his luck at the same spot. Imagine his surprise when he saw the same tench swimming towards him carrying something in its mouth. The fish came right up to the edge of the stream, and, having calmly dropped the object in its mouth upon the margin of the bank, retreated, stopped and waited, apparently for expected developments.

The fisherman reached down and lifted the object from the bank for closer examination. It turned out to be a small raw onion which the tench had evidently captured as it floated down the stream, and, with pathetic hopefulness, had carried to the angler as a mute appeal that the onion should be cooked at once, with steak, for its lunch!

Some fish are very intelligent.

At a competition on the Thames last year, a rather remarkable incident happened. It was close upon the finish that a couple of ardent competitors, angling within a few paces of each other, almost simultaneously felt a "bite," and acted accordingly. These two men had been marvellously equal in their "takes" up to this point, therefore they were both very eager to secure another catch before "cease fishing" sounded. Greatly to their amazement, then, they saw they had both captured the same fish—a fine carp!

The anglers settled the difficulty as to whose "catch" it was by the ancient means of chucking a penny in the air and calling "head" and "tail," the calls being suggestive of a more Solomonic solution by an equal division, by knife, of the carp, for the man who won the toss also won the prize, by not more than the weight of the dually-captured fish!



A Story of a Russian Revolt.

By Geo. C. Wallis.

The long whip whirled and cracked, the horse plunged forward with quickened exertion, Count Boroff swore.

"Make haste, Nikolai," he shouted, from the depth of his furs. "This vile storm will overwhelm us if you do not push on."

"I am doing my best," replied the driver, not turning his head. "The horse is anxious to be home, too."

"Not more than I," the Count muttered. "Heaven knows how this revolt may spread, how soon some of them may be on the move, or whether the news has reached my estate yet. It would be like my *moujiks* to rise and make mischief. I must get there to-night and make preparations for taking Pauline out of the way of possible danger."

The sleigh sped on, throwing the powdery snow in ridges from its wet and shining runners. Moment by moment the white downfall increased in volume, and the landscape grew rapidly dark. A keen, searching wind arose, driving the feathery flakes in fierce, cold eddies.

Nothing but the stress of the great crisis would have taken Count Boroff out in such a storm as this, not if twenty drivers, waiting his announced appearance at the wayside station, had perished in the night. In the carnage of Vladimir's Day he had seen the outburst of revolution, and he was one who had need to fear a reign of terror. Making up his mind suddenly, he had telegraphed to his estate that he was to be met at the station, and was now on the long homeward journey across the waste.

The official at the solitary station-building had told him that the bad weather was likely to continue; that wolves had already been seen in the district; that rumours of great events in the cities were about; and had begged him to stay within doors overnight. Count Boroff had shrugged his shoulders, and seeing that Nikolai had come to meet him—Nikolai, upon whom he could depend, though he was surly of face and speech—had resolved to travel at once.

And now master and man were in the storm, the sleigh labouring heavily across the dreary, gale-swept expanse. The snow fell thicker, the wind grew more violent, the darkness more dense. For a long time after he had lost the way the driver flogged the horse on, in dogged resolution. He, too, had reasons for reaching home that night, or, at at latest, by dawn; but they were not the Count's reasons.

At last Nikolai pulled the floundering, exhausted animal to a sudden stop.

"It is useless, master; we are lost."

"Fool, blind dotard!" cried the Count, in unreasoning anger. "What do I keep you and your ignorant brothers for? Drive on, and let us gain some shelter."

"One rat the less. It will teach the young vermin to keep quiet."

"It is useless, master," repeated Nikolai sullenly. "No man can see through the falling snow, and all the tracks are covered up. The horse also needs rest. If we wait, the storm may pass."

"Pleasant to wait here!" said Count Boroff. He settled himself deep in his furs at the bottom of the sleigh, so that his servant's form shielded him somewhat from the driving gusts of snow. Not a thought did he give to Nikolai, sitting motionless on the driver's seat, exposed to the full force of the piercing wind. In some of these remote, isolated districts, the Russian nobles treat their servants little better than their ancestors treated their serfs. On some estates the *moujiks* are still serfs in all but the name. Count Boroff's estate was one of these unhappy places: hence his fear and his haste.

Shivering with the cold, his teeth chattering, Nikolai sat stoically silent, expecting no more consideration than he received. Yet his soul was afire within, and this last iniquity did but add needless fuel to the blaze. Slow to think, slower still to decide and to act, Nikolai's passions, once roused, were not easily allayed. Slow to form a great resolve, he held to a purpose, once formed, with bulldog tenacity. And as he sat in the storm, freezing whilst his master rolled in furs, the pang of an unaccomplished purpose was gnawing his heart with agony. He racked his brain to devise some means of pursuing the journey. It was not the cold he cared for; it was the delay.

He pictured in his mind the events of the last few days—of certain days now remote. He remembered many of his master's acts of injustice and tyranny. He remembered the Peasants' Rising of years ago, the part his father had taken in it, and how he had been knouted to death, lashed unmercifully, by order of an officer who was a friend of the Count.

He remembered the Count's brutal laugh — in which his young wife had joined—at the tragic termination of the punishment, and his words: "One rat the less. It will teach the young vermin to keep quiet." He remembered how he and his two brothers, assembled in their little hut that night, had made a solemn vow to bring Count Boroff to ruin, to mete out to him and his the fate that had been meted out to their father.

The three were young and strong, of iron will, and patient. Thinking he had cowed them by their father's fate, Count Boroff had taken them back into his service, and in his service they had remained, sullen, brooding, and watchful, patiently waiting the time that they dumbly felt would some day come.

They had borne many indignities and acts of tyranny without complaint, the knout had marked their own shoulders, and the other peasants had sneered at them for their loyalty; but the three brothers, biding their time, were grimly silent, cherishing each wrong as one more item put to the already heavy score that must be reckoned for, one more item added to the debt of hate that would be exacted to the uttermost.

Nikolai remembered how Paroff, the schemer, had first thought of revolt and flight; how Ivan, the talker, had spoken carefully to the others, working on their feelings until they were almost ready for action; and how he, the unscrupulous, had

strangled the life out of one cur who was on the point of betraying the plot. Then he remembered the last few weeks—the wild talk of great strikes, of universal unrest, of red revolution, and then the news of the actual revolt of the cities. The secret societies have spies everywhere, and Ivan was one of them.

When the Count's telegram came, the brothers realised that the long-awaited moment was near.

Nikolai thought of it with a spasm of fierce joy.

Leaving Paroff and Ivan in charge of the house, he had come to meet the master with the sleigh. When he returned—which must be by the first gleams of dawn at latest, or the sobered peasants, fearful for themselves, might scatter and seek safety in premature flight—the Count's wife, with Count Boroff himself, would be made to writhe under the blows of the knout, as Nikolai's father had writhed years ago. And this time the knout would be applied as mercilessly as then. In fancy Nikolai already heard the sound of the cruel blows, and it was as the echo of sweet music in his ears.

Yet how could their revenge be complete if Count Boroff did not reach home in time? Must all their patience, their long-cherished hatred, be made of no avail by this storm? True, *he* might kill the Count—it would be easy with the grip of his strong hands across the throat—but the Count must not die that way. He must die as old Nikolai had died, and Paroff and Ivan must be able to laugh at his death agony. It must be that, for had they not vowed it by all they held sacred? What would Paroff and Ivan say to him if the plan failed?

A moment later, the solution of the problem that beset him came to Nikolai's slow mind. Why had he not thought of it before? Paroff would have done it long since. It was the only way.

He was about to speak, when the horse shook, trembling, and raised its head. Looking round, Nikolai became aware that the storm was abating. The snowfall was diminishing in volume. With startling rapidity the storm ceased, the heavy clouds broke and parted, and the white full moon, sailing through the sky, silvered all the snow-clad plain with chilly brilliance.

In the first moment of the brief illumination, Nikolai saw how deeply the snow lay on hillocks and in hollows, how heavy was the drift in which the sleigh was now imbedded. He saw, too, a conical-shaped hill in the distance, and recognised it as a landmark. Not so many versts beyond that hill stood Count Boroff's house, where they would even now be eagerly expecting him. He saw, too, a sight that made his chilled blood run colder still with horror—that made him reconsider the solution he had found to his great problem.

Across the white expanse a group of dark forms was trotting—a straggling group, with several larger forms leading. The group was coming in the direction of the sleigh. The moon was quickly obscured again by the drifting clouds, but Nikolai knew what it was that he had seen. Owing to the severe weather, wolves had been driven further west this winter than for many years, and there had been rumours of their approach to this neighbourhood. As Nikolai realised the peril of his position, the foremost wolf, seeing food ahead, gave tongue. The whole pack joined in chorus and quickened its pace.

Nikolai's slow brain worked faster than it had ever done before—worked rapidly. He had no time to be deliberate. He had resolved, just before seeing the wolves, to rouse the Count from the stupor into which he was fast sinking, and tell him to get on the horse. If it were cut loose from the sleigh, horse and rider might get home safely. Left in the sleigh, Nikolai thought he might endure the cold and keep his life in him until the morrow. At any rate, the Count would have a chance to reach home, where Paroff and Ivan and the rest were anxiously waiting to welcome him.

But now—the wolves! If his master were not roused, Nikolai knew that he had time to cut the horse loose and make good his own escape, leaving Count Boroff to his fate. Yet how could he face Paroff and Ivan then? The Count must not be left thus, he must die as they had sworn, under the blows of the knout.

There was only one way. The Count must go—his life must be saved from the wolves at any cost. There was no time to get the sleigh out of the drift, nor, if there had been, would it be possible for the horse, dragging the vehicle and the two men, to out-distance the wolves. The Count must have the horse, and he, Nikolai, must stay by the drift. "After all," he reflected, "Paroff has given his brains to our plot, and Ivan his tongue; I can but give my life. The Count must get home to-night."

With some difficulty he shook his master out of his numb lethargy, and told him the danger and his plans. At the mention of the

He drew out his revolver and tossed it to his servant. "Fight to the last, Nikolai," he cried.

word "wolves" terror leapt into the Count's eyes, and with a hasty glance at the ominously near pack, he was awakened to action. Springing out of his furs, he assisted Nikolai to free the horse, and that done, climbed upon its back. Self-preservation appealed to him as Nature's primal law, and he had not time to think of gratitude. Yet, as he settled himself as best he could for the ride, and the nearing pack broke out into angry cry, an irrational impulse made Boroff hesitate a moment. He drew out his revolver and tossed it to his servant.

"Fight to the last, Nikolai!" he cried.

The servant did not stoop to pick up the glittering weapon.

"Ride straight for the hill, Count!" he cried in a steady voice. "Your wife will be waiting for you, and my brothers too. Tell them that I have done my duty."

Count Boroff rode off, fear-driven, towards his fate, rode towards the faint glow of the approaching dawn, the horse needing neither urging nor guidance.

Nikolai, left alone, turned to face the oncoming wolves. The Count had gone to his just doom; what mattered his own end? He faced them with the resolution of triumphant hate, of sublime self-sacrifice in the cause of a terrible revenge.

Defying the piercing cold, he stood erect, motionless, silent. The wolves came steadily on; they were close to him; they were around him.

* * * * *

Several days afterwards a brief paragraph appeared in the newspapers, telling how the mutilated bodies of a Russian count and his wife had been found on the terrace in front of their country house. They had evidently been unmercifully knouted—knouted to death—and no proof was to be had regarding the perpetrators of the outrage. The house and hamlet near it were deserted; the servants and peasants were scattered, and regarding their knowledge or whereabouts kept grim silence. The paragraph was remarked upon as one more instance of the lengths to which oppression will drive men for whom life holds neither joy nor hope. But of the thousands who read the bald account, none ever heard the story of the malevolent heroism of Nikolai.

The wolves did not, like the wielders of the knout, leave recognisable traces of their work.

How strange it would be were the Girl to hold a [illegible] toilet and her comfort.

THE QUEEN OF CREATION.

A Description of Some of Her Subjects, and the Tribute they Bring.

By F. E. Baily.

It is generally conceded that man is the ruler of creation. Perhaps the concession is made on the principle that "he says so, and he ought to know." In any case, the fact remains that she who "brings man into the world, and hastens his departure from it," as some unkind person once said, is never regarded as the sovereign of the world around us.

Yet it is for the whim and caprice of woman that all Nature has been created. Man she rules with a rod of iron, and there is nothing either on the earth, in the water under it, nor in the air, which does not either contribute to woman's comfort, or go to provide some article of her clothing. And the further this statement is probed, and the more it is tested, the more will its truth be established.

To begin with, it must be determined exactly of what the average woman's clothing consists before the constituents thereof can be traced to their bases of supply, to use a military expression.

The typical smartly-clad Girl, such as we jostle against in the streets, and find described more or less accurately in the "ladies corner" of newspapers, will be dressed, for walking purposes, somewhat as follows:

She will wear a tailor-made serge skirt, which, being well cut, will give her that smart, jaunty air beloved of her kind. Over a blouse, which may be made of silk or other material, according to the season, she throws a stole, either of fur or marabout, ostensibly for the sake of extra warmth. There are

many modes of wearing the stole, some of which are fearful and wonderful. The Girl is crowned by a neat hat made of straw, and trimmed "probably" with an ostrich feather.

There are, in addition to these salient features, little indispensable accessories, such as dainty footwear and gloves, knots of ribbon or lace, without mentioning petticoats, corsets, or underwear.

As regards jewellery, the Girl may wear a ring or two, and perhaps a string of pearls round her neck.

In her hand she carries one of those little bags in which poor vain woman keeps all the cherished nicknacks for her personal adornment, such as her powder-box, her tiny mirror, her scent, and who knows what beside?

This description of the Girl's walking costume depicts an ordinary, unostentatious toilet, such as one meets scores of times in the day, and which is as simple as it is charming. Yet how many and varied are the necessary products employed in its manufacture. A whole menagerie of animals, to commence with, is laid under contribution, to leave plants, and vegetation generally, out of the question for the time being.

The ostrich scarcely appreciates its feathers sufficiently. Could it see them in the Girl's hat, however, it might alter its opinion.

These animals would terrify the wearer of the costume if she met them all at once, although neither the mouse nor the black-beetle are among them, and some of them would scare her if she encountered them singly.

The creatures come from all latitudes and climates. The zoological collection is as follows, in order of size:

The silkworm, the oyster, the tortoise, the goat, the fox, the sheep, the pig, the deer, the ostrich, and the whale.

Each of these interesting creatures has virtually said to the Modern Girl: "With all my worldly goods I thee endow," and, what is more to the point, has done it. By the time they are in wear, some of the articles have so lost their identity that it takes the trained eye to ascertain their "animal of origin," yet with a little careful observation, all can satisfactorily be accounted for.

To consider the functions of the creatures mentioned above in order of importance, the silkworm is the first to be discussed. This worm is so well-known that a description of its work is hardly necessary. But it is one of the coquette's most powerful allies. To it is accorded the honour of supplying those little knots of ribbon, or the captivating silk scarves which are worn with such distracting grace by their fair owner. The silkworm also provides the belt which caresses the symmetrical figure, and the rustling silk petticoats whose "frou-frou" is like the flutter of leaves in autumn. What would the Modern Girl do without the silkworm? It is the Whiteley of her menagerie.

It also furnishes the stockings which clothe her shapely ankle, and which in summer, when they are of the "open work" variety, are displayed to such advantage whenever possible. The sheep gives his wool, wherewith the tailor-made skirt of blessed memory is fabricated. In the romantic days of Sydney and Spenser, the pretty ladies who liked to imagine themselves shepherdesses, curled and scented and be-ribboned the sheep, or lamb rather, and made a toy of it, while clothing themselves in silks.

The modern girl is more prosaic. She has never heard of Spenser, so she prefers to eat the sheep and wear its wool. The shorn coat of this patient animal furnishes the bulk of her walking and sporting costumes.

The whale looms very large in the question of feminine finery.

Primarily, it is used in corset manufacture. But this is not the only function of the wily

Even the monsters of the deep bow to the imperious demands of the Modern Girl.

whale. It also helps the dressmaker to make what the profession terms a "fitted bodice." And in a multitude of ways the monster of the deep obliges femininity, so that pictures of it, were justice done, should adorn every boudoir.

The ostrich is not quite such a good friend to the Girl as the whale or the silk-worm, yet, nevertheless, there are few maidens who do not love to possess "picture" hats, with long beautifully-curled ostrich plumes lying gracefully around the brim, and nestling lovingly against the crown.

It has already been mentioned in connection with the Girl's walking costume that she frequently wears a stole, if not for use, at least for ornament.

The fox usually dedicates his skin to the task of providing this stole. And there is no doubt that his post-mortem situation is a most enviable one. It is his august privilege to protect the pretty shoulders of his mistress from the cold. She squeezes him closer round her in the winter, and buries her chin in his soft silky fur to keep away the draught and the cold winds. He is always with her. She takes him to church, in her motor car, out walking—everywhere, in fact. Who shall say that the fox is not the spoilt darling of all the beasts that contribute to my lady's wardrobe?

Though the catalogue of animals is now drawing to a close, there yet remain the oyster and the tortoise, if indeed they come under the heading of animals.

The oyster provides the string of pearls which encircle the girl's throat.

The tortoise supplies the tortoiseshell combs (though, alas! these are frequently celluloid imitations) which find a soft and delightful home in the Girl's scented hair. They help her maid to dress it into bewitching coils when she goes to a dance or to the theatre. She manages to lose these articles frequently, which makes the heart of the hair-dresser rejoice.

Sweet seventeen cannot dispense with the pig. He provides her with a "vanity bag."

Lastly, the pig is a good friend to the maiden of the twentieth century.

A small corner of the pig's hide went to make that little bag, often termed by contemptuous young men a "vanity bag," which contains all the "trifles light as air" mentioned before.

Thus it has been made plain that the Girl has good friends among the animals.

The vegetable and mineral kingdoms,

however, are also to the fore in helping to make her more beautiful than Nature originally intended.

Flax, hemp, cotton, straw, rice, and the rose are not unimportant factors in feminine apparel.

Straw was employed to manufacture the stuart hat which holds the ostrich feather. Yes, the vulgar straw, often employed by man for the coarse but indispensable service of clearing out a clogged pipe, takes on grace and charm when enlisted by his sisters to shade their pretty foreheads and fragile complexions from the scorching rays of the sun.

Rice also has to do with the complexion, but in a different manner. It forms the thin impalpable powder which beclouds Beauty's features, and enables her delicate skin to withstand the ravages of wind and weather.

The rose—everyone is aware of the rose's functions.

Not only does the queen of flowers deck the Girl when placed in her hair or her dress; not only when simulated by the hand of Art does it adorn her Sunday hat, but it is employed in the concoction of the delicate perfume which makes her fresh as a May morning. The girl might dispense with the pig, but she could never forego the rose

Many jewels and metals also contribute to the Girl's glory. And two vegetables might be added.

One is the sugar cane, which she would rather die than be without, for what is life to the girl minus bonbons? The other plant must be whispered in the discreetest of asides. It is the tobacco plant—the source of that clandestine luxury, the sweet, the naughty, the soothing and delightful cigarette! What would the girl do without her cigarette—the symbol of her emancipation, her flag of liberty, the stolen fruit that always tastes the best?

Enough has been said already to justify the title of this article. But when it is realised how many men are requisitioned to provide all the necessary articles enumerated, the Girl's supremacy is more fully established than ever.

In a word, there is nothing in existence which does not serve in some fashion or other, no matter how remote, to minister to the whims or caprices or necessities of woman, lovely woman. Therefore, it may well be asked in conclusion: "Where is the man who possesses the necessary temerity to come forward and deny that the Modern Girl is the Queen of Creation?"

Another instance of the Girl's sovereignty. To provide her with pearls men dive into the ocean.

By Allen Upward.

This is the First Instalment of a New Series of exciting Ghost Stories. They are entirely Different in Conception from Anything of the Kind that has ever been Published before. Each Story is Complete in Itself

I—THE STORY OF THE GREEN HOUSE, WALLINGTON.

In undertaking to relate some of my experiences in connection with the purchase and sale of haunted houses, I desire to make it clear that I have no theories to put forward on the subject of what is called the "occult."

I was successful in this class of business, but some of the adventures I went through were of such a character that I dared not continue. My nerves are fairly strong, but there are some things which I never wish to face again.

I was first tempted to dabble in this unlucky class of business by the Green House, Wallington.

My partner, Mr. Mortimer—our firm is Mortimer & Hargreaves—mentioned to me one day that he had had a client in to see him who was very anxious to obtain an immediate offer, at almost any price, for a house situated in what was then the rural district of Wallington.

"He says he cannot sell the house because people think it is haunted. It is all nonsense, of course; but the people in the neighbourhood have got the idea firmly into their heads; and now if any tenants come they are sure to hear of it directly, and get frightened. The result is that he has lost tenant after tenant, and now the reputation of the house is so bad that he cannot sell it."

"What sort of a house is it?" I asked. "And what will he take for it?"

"He says he will take anything—£500 if he can't get more; though the house cost £1,500 to build. You had better see the man yourself."

I therefore dropped a line to Mr. Giltstrap, the owner of the Green House, requesting him to go down with me to see the property.

On the way to Wallington I put some questions about the house to Giltstrap, whose manner was rather reserved. He assured me it was in thorough repair, but he seemed reluctant to answer when I asked him about the ghost.

"Is there any story about the house? Anything to account for its being haunted?"

"No; no. What story should there be? It's a modern house—hardly been built ten years."

"And how long has it been your property?"

"I bought it as soon as it was put up."

"And how long has it been haunted?"

Mr. Giltstrap frowned as though he disliked to hear this word.

"The house has been talked about for some years now—four or five."

His disinclination to speak was so evident that I did not care to pursue the subject.

We got out at Wallington Station, and as we passed a house agent's on the road Giltstrap said abruptly:

"I must step in here and get the keys. Wait a moment."

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As a house-agent myself, I could understand that he did not wish to introduce me to the local man, lest it should lead to any dispute about commission. But my curiosity about the Green House was so strong that I could not resist the temptation to walk in after him.

I was just in time to hear the owner say curtly:

"I have called for the keys of the Green House, if you please."

The local agent was evidently a man in a small way, for we found him seated at a desk in the outer office, in his shirtsleeves. He gave a cross look at Giltstrap, and a suspicious one at me, and then rose and reached down the keys from a nail.

"I haven't been able to find a caretaker yet," he said with a touch of malice. "They say you must pay them for living in such a house."

Giltstrap reddened at this speech, which was calculated to put off an intending purchaser. He glared first at the agent and then at me, snatched the keys without a word, and hurried out.

The Green House was a modern, red-brick one, standing in a road with several others, and certainly not looking at all the kind of place to have a supernatural legend attached to it.

"There is no ghost, and it does not walk anywhere," he said irritably.

As soon as we got inside I saw that the house was partly furnished. Giltstrap explained that he had been trying to get someone to come and occupy it rent free for a time in order to live down its reputation.

I asked if there was any room particularly connected with the ghostly rumours.

After what struck me as a momentary hesitation, he led me upstairs into what was clearly the principal bedroom, overlooking the front garden and the road outside.

"Is this where the ghost walks?" I asked as I glanced round the empty room. The paper on the walls was in good condition, and the ceiling had been newly white-washed.

The owner of the Green House was plainly annoyed by my insistence.

"There is no ghost, and it does not walk anywhere" he said irritably. "But the people who sleep in this room complain."

"What do they complain of?"

He fidgeted and again showed some reluctance in answering.

"Oh, nothing except some nonsense or other. They say they do not sleep well, and they dream things. Fancies, you know—fancies."

"Well, what sort of fancies?" I persisted. "If they dream, they must dream of something."

Giltstrap glanced up at the ceiling, and swiftly withdrew his eyes with a nervous tremor. I was now firmly persuaded that he himself had been the victim of some spectral horror, though he was anxious to conceal it for fear of frightening me off.

"Perhaps I had better not tell you anything," he said, after considering a moment. "There is a great deal in the influence of suggestion, so it is said. If I were to tell you what the people who have slept in this room have seen, or dreamt they have seen, that might be enough to make you dream the same. Whereas, if a sensible man without any notions came and slept here, he would most likely never be disturbed."

I thought there was something in what he said, and did not press him further.

There was a staircase outside leading to a second floor, and I moved towards it.

"Oh, do you want to see the other rooms?" Giltstrap snapped, as he prepared to follow.

"I want to see everything," I said decidedly.

Upstairs I found another room which had been left unfurnished. The prospect from the window showed me that it was situated over the haunted chamber.

"Is there something wrong with this room, as well?" I demanded.

"The servants don't like sleeping in it," was the grudging admission. "It does very well as a boxroom."

I saw that it was useless to try and extract any more information from Giltstrap.

After a thorough inspection, I decided that the house would be well worth £1200, apart from its evil reputation. I went back to town with the owner, and bargained with him on the way.

I was very anxious to secure an option to purchase the Green House at the end of a month, during which time I was to occupy it, but this proposal the owner obstinately refused.

"I want to sell it outright or not at all. If you live in it a month and have no trouble, I shall then be able to ask a reasonable price."

Anxious to secure a bargain, I gave way, and got out at Victoria the owner of the Green House, at the price of £500.

When I told my partner the next day what I had done, he declined to commit himself.

"I shall know whether it is a good bargain or not when I hear what you have sold it for," he observed grimly.

My next step was to secure some attendance, and to send down some furniture for the two empty rooms round which the mystery appeared to cling.

In the course of the negotiations I had occasion for the services of my lady secretary. I was accustomed to discuss business matters with her, and as soon as she learned the character of the present transaction, she surprised me by displaying an unusual interest in it. She even volunteered her assistance.

"I wonder if you would mind my going to see the Green House, Mr. Hargreaves? I am very much interested in psychical research."

"Do you mean that you really believe there is something in it?" I exclaimed in dismay. I had grown to look on Miss Sargent as a young lady of great intelligence, and I was not very well pleased at the idea of taking the ghost seriously.

"I know that there are things in Nature which ordinary rules do not explain," was the grave answer. "I have seen things myself which could not be accounted for by natural means."

This was rather alarming. I recalled the strange, uneasy manner of the late owner of the Green House, and asked myself whether he had not been a secret believer in some occult happenings.

"I am what is called a sensitive," Miss Sargent proceeded to explain. "I have a peculiar faculty for seeing any abnormal manifestations."

A thought struck me.

"Would it be possible for you to go and pass a night or two there?" I inquired. "I don't mind telling you that if the apparition, or whatever it is, can be exorcised, I hope to sell the house at a considerable profit; and I should be glad to pay a small commission."

Miss Sargent appeared to welcome the suggestion. She was a good girl, the chief support of a widowed mother and three little sisters, and I knew she would like to earn something for them.

The question was referred to her mother, who arranged to come with her, it being understood that I should form one of the party. I engaged a respectable woman to come in by the day, and, on the evening agreed upon, we went down together to take possession of the haunted house.

Miss Sargent and her mother were installed in the haunted room, and I decided to occupy the attic overhead.

After a pleasant supper the two ladies retired at about eleven o'clock. I sat up a little later, smoking a cigar, and contrasting the cheerful evening I had just passed with the lonely ones I was accustomed to in my West-end chambers.

Towards twelve I went upstairs, intending to go to bed. But whether it was the sensation of being in a strange house under such circumstances, or a secret apprehension of which I was hardly conscious, no sooner did I find myself in the room I had chosen than I was seized with an overmastering reluctance to get into the bed.

I took off my coat merely, rolled myself well up in the blankets, and tried to go to sleep. I am an old traveller, and have never experienced any difficulty in sleeping in my clothes in trains, or under similar circumstances.

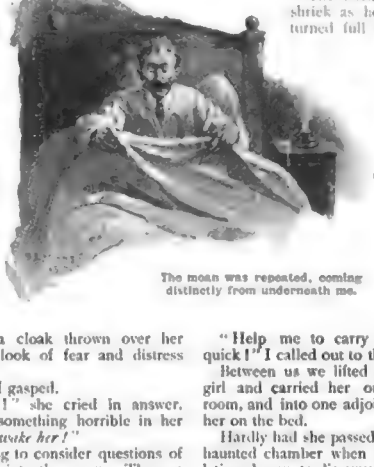
But on this occasion the attempt was hopeless; I lay on the bed literally shivering, and not from cold. I neither saw nor heard anything, I was not alarmed in the ordinary sense, and yet if I had known there was a murderer lurking in the room ready to spring on me and stab me the moment I closed my eyes I could not have felt more wretchedly afraid.

Suddenly I heard a low moan—the moan of a creature in mortal terror, drawn out till it became a muffled scream.

I flung off the blankets, raised my head, and listened with a beating heart.

The moan was repeated, coming distinctly from underneath me. In an instant I had grasped the truth. It came from the room below.

I sprang from the bed, and, without stopping to put on my coat, lit the candle I had brought up with me, and flew downstairs.



The moan was repeated, coming distinctly from underneath me.

As I reached the first floor landing the moan was repeated in a more terrible key—the key of horror instead of terror. At the same moment the door of the haunted room was thrown open, and Mrs. Sargent appeared on the threshold, with a cloak thrown over her shoulders, and a look of fear and distress on her face.

"What is it?" I gasped.

"It is Alwyne!" she cried in answer. "She is seeing something horrible in her sleep, *and I can't wake her!*"

Without stopping to consider questions of etiquette, I dashed into the room. The gas had been turned full on, and by its light I saw the girl lying stretched on a couch at the foot of the bed, her features frozen into the expression of one who looks upon some horrid sight, while from her parted lips there issued those appalling sounds which wounded like the stabs of a knife.

I caught her by the shoulders and shook her, without making the slightest change in her swoon-like condition.

"Water!" I called out to the mother, who stood wringing her hands, too dazed to act.

The water was brought, and I dashed half a glassful in the face of the sufferer. At first it had no more effect than if she had been dead.

Then came a startling change.

The moans suddenly ceased, the victim opened her eyes, which showed the dull glassy stare of a somnambulist, and sitting half up, she commenced muttering so quickly and indistinctly that it was difficult to catch the words.

"The-blood-the-blood-the-blood-the-blood-dripping-dripping-dripping-dripping-dripping-from-the red-leak-in the-ceiling-the-red-leak-the red-leak-in-the-ceiling-in-the-ceiling-dripping-on-*me*-dripping-on-ME-dripping-on-ME!"

The words rose into a wild shriek as her blank eyes were turned full on the ceiling overhead, the ceiling between her room and mine.

Involuntarily I looked up. The ceiling did not show the slightest mark. As I had noticed when I went over the house with Giltstrap, it was newly whitewashed—I thought I now knew why.

But the moment was not for reflection.

"Help me to carry her out of this—quick!" I called out to the mother.

Between us we lifted up the unconscious girl and carried her out of the accursed room, and into one adjoining, where we laid her on the bed.

Hardly had she passed the doorway of the haunted chamber when the dreadful ejaculations began to die away, and the rigidity of the features to relax. In a short time the trance condition passed away into a deep sleep, and I was able to leave Miss Sargent to her mother's care.

When she woke in the morning, her mother told me, she remembered nothing whatever of what had passed in the night. She was barely conscious of having had a bad dream.

At her own request, I described to her at

The gas had been turned full on, and by its light I saw the girl lying stretched on a couch at the foot of the bed.

breakfast what had occurred, as minutely as possible. She was profoundly impressed.

"I am certain," she declared with conviction, "that what I saw represents something that actually happened in this house. Dreadful as it sounds, I firmly believe that somebody has been murdered in that attic in which you slept, and that his blood did drip through the ceiling of the room below, as I saw it last night."

Reluctant as I was for many reasons to entertain such a suggestion, I dared not neglect it altogether. I determined at all events to do whatever could be done to solve the mystery.

As soon as Miss Sargent and her mother had left the house, in which the elder lady would not hear of their passing another night, though her daughter did not seem in the least afraid, I went straight to a builder's in the neighbourhood, and engaged him to send some men to examine the flooring between the two haunted rooms.

The builder received my order with marked interest.

"I knew there was something the matter with that house," he observed. "It ain't likely that tenant after tenant would come away scared without something was wrong. Why, do you know, sir, in the last five years, since Mr. Giltstrap gave it up, I've white-washed one ceiling in that house *nine times!*"

Then Mr. Giltstrap once lived in it himself, did he?" I exclaimed.

"Seeing that I built it for him, I can say he did," was the answer.

"And why did he leave it?" I demanded, fairly roused.

But the builder could not or would not satisfy my curiosity on that head.

"Mr. Giltstrap was a good customer of mine; he always paid me regular; and I ain't got nothing to say against him."

The builder's interest led him to accompany his men, a carpenter and a plasterer, to the scene of action.

I pointed out the place on the ceiling, as nearly as I could judge it, from which the ghostly dew had appeared to fall.

The men took measurements, and then, proceeding to the attic above, located a spot under the bed in which I had tried to sleep.

The bed was quickly removed, the flooring stripped off, and in the space between the joists there was exposed a mass of lime.

Both the men, as well as their master, were

quick to declare that the lime could not have been left there when the house was completed.

"That lime has been put there for no good," the builder asserted. "If you want some things hidden away and destroyed, there's nothing better than what lime is when it's fresh. It burns as well as fire, and makes no smoke."

"You mean a dead body?" I said shuddering.

"I don't say nothing about that," the builder answered, pulling himself up. "It ain't for me to say what that lime's been used for. All I say is it wasn't me that left it there, nor yet my men."

The two men began clearing the stuff away. The volatile element had evidently evaporated long ago. As they struck downward with their tools, one of them went through the plaster of the ceiling below, and a shaft of light came up.

An exclamation from one of the men followed. I bent down and peered into the cavity.

On a large beam which here crossed the floor I saw a deep black stain, the stain of long-dried blood!

A moment after the carpenter stooped suddenly, groped about with one hand amid the woodwork, and drew forth to the light a small sharp stiletto, rusted with the same dismal stain.

Nothing more was found. I gave the builder an order to entirely renew the flooring between the two haunted rooms; and from the time that was done, there has never again been the slightest complaint from any occupier of the property.

I let the Green House almost immediately to a respectable tenant, a retired schoolmaster, who changed its name; and before a year was out I was able to dispose of it to a purchaser at the price of £1,250, a sum which enabled me to compensate Miss Sargent for her trying experience.

* * * * *

The most extraordinary part of the story remains to be told.

The report of what had taken place having got abroad in Wallington, the local police came to me to obtain the stiletto, which I had been careful to preserve. By its means they were enabled to unearth a crime which had gone unsuspected till that hour, and to extort a confession from the murderer.

Into the details of this terrible case I do not mean to enter. It is sufficient to say that the victim had perished while asleep in the attic, and that his blood had actually soaked through the ceiling into the room below, which was that of his murderer—Giltstrap!

MAISIE'S FROCKS

When Maisie's dressed in blue,
She's just a bird of Paradise –
A vision fair of summer skies,
That match the hue of her dear eyes,
When Maisie's dressed in blue.

When Maisie's dressed in pink,
Her dainty colour shames the rose
That in her garden warmly glows,
When she goes by, its petals close,
When Maisie's dressed in pink.

When Maisie's dressed in green,
On hot, close days, she brings glad dreams
Of shady trees and sparkling streams—
So bright, and cool, and fresh she seems,
When Maisie's dressed in green.

When Maisie's dressed in **brown**,
Her air of russet autumn **charms**
Like leafy woods, my spirit **calms**,
I long to take her in my **arms**,
When Maisie's dressed in **brown**.

When Maisie's dressed in **grey**,
A fairy of the morning **mist**,
So sweet she looks (**could you resist?**):
But much too dainty to be **kissed**,
When Maisie's dressed in **grey**.

When Maisie's dressed in **white**,
The best of all, a glorious **sheen!**
Ah, think, just think what **it will mean!**
For Maisie on my arm **shall lean**,
When Maisie's dressed in **white**.

When Maisie's dressed in white,
The fairest sight a man could see,
The dearest thing on earth to me,
Ah! then my bride will Maisie be,
When Maisie's dressed in white!

Trixie Hobson.

MR. —HIS PAGES.

Christmas Number round again! "Mr. X," rousing himself from struggling with a problem, realised the fact with a start, and turned to looking over some of his past pages. It is exactly three years ago, he finds, that he first made his bow to the readers of the ROYAL in December, 1902. Then he had but one page, and his morning letters were but few. Now they come tumbling in by every post. From Africa they come, from India, from Canada, from Australia, from nearly all the Continental countries, and from many little islands and corners of the world where Britons are building the Empire, and amusing themselves in their spare time with "Mr. X's" Pages. Here goes then: **To all his Readers Over-Sea and to all his Readers in the British Isles "Mr. X" wishes the Best and Brightest of Christmases with Good Health and Good Luck throughout the Coming Year.**

Puzzle Pedestrian, Packs of ROYAL Playing-cards or Puzzle Purses will be given as prizes to readers who forward new puzzles, problems, or other tricks which are inserted in this feature. Any readers communicating with "Mr. X" and wishing for a reply, should inclose a stamped, addressed envelope. All letters should be addressed to "Mr. X" care of THE ROYAL MAGAZINE, 10 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

FIVE SHILLINGS REWARD!

"Mr. X" is very worried. He promised the Editor some humorous verses for the Christmas Number. He wrote the verses. They were very, very humorous, but they would not rhyme! The lines kept ending in such words as chimney, crimson, oblige, window, widow, twelfth. On press day the position was terrible. The editor kept shouting: "What *are* you doing with those verses, 'X ?" and "Mr. X," perspiring profusely, would yell back, "Can you give me a rhyme to fugue, or gulf, or have, or scorer, or kilne, or microcosm?"

There followed a heated discussion as to who was writing the verses, "Mr. X" or the Editor, and, at last, the Editor went to press without them. He now blames "Mr. X" for thinking of such hopeless words as those given above, but "Mr. X" holds that there are many similar rhymeless words in the English language, and he hereby implores his readers to help him find them.

"Mr. X" offers a reward of Five Shillings to the reader who sends him, by December 20th, what is, in "Mr. X's" opinion, the best list of English words to which there are no rhymes.

Letters must be marked "Rhymeless," and addressed "Mr. X." care of the ROYAL MAGAZINE, Henrietta Street, W.C.

TEA-TIME AND BED-TIME.

HILDEBRAND: "Do you know why it gets dark so soon after tea now?"

CONSTANTINE: "Because it's winter-time, I suppose."

HILDEBRAND: "Yes, but the real reason is because when 't' (tea) is gone, night is nigh."

WORDS WANTED.

To meet her lover on the pier she reckoned,
But found him by the *first* and with her *second*.
To *third* a turmoil she returned unseen,
As *fourth* and artless as a May-day Queen
That lover she disdained again to see
And married one more staid and *fifth* than he.

[The answers, when properly found, may be—must be—arranged in the form of a Rhymeless "square word."]

EERY.

BOB: "Which do you think the simpler word to spell—Tweedle-dum or Tweedle-dee?"

WILLIAM: "I think the one is just as easy as the other."

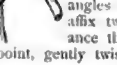
BOB: "Yes, and that's just where you're wrong. Because Tweedle-dee is obviously spelt with more ease" (e's).

Games & Tricks for Winter Evenings.

To Spin a Shilling on the Point of a Needle.

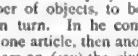
You need not be a Cinquevalli in order to accomplish this trick — a glance at the diagram, a little care, and you should do it quite easily.

Fix one end of the needle firmly into the cork in the bottle's mouth. Cut a slit in one end of the second cork. Into this slit wedge the shilling. Now, midway down this cork and at right angles to the shilling affix two forks, balance the shilling on the needle's point, gently twist—and there you are.



Shocking!

Gravely inform one of your friends that you can impart electricity to any object in such a manner that when he touches it he will receive a shock. You then make him leave the room. Whilst he is outside you and the rest of the company arrange on the table a number of objects, to be touched by the victim in turn. In he comes, gingerly touches first one article, then another. As he lays his fingers on (say) the sixth everybody gives a sudden scream — and the victim, startled, nearly jumps out of his skin at the shock. This game may sound silly—*try it*.



Fun with a Threepenny.

Show your friends a threepenny-bit. Tell them that you (being a reader of "Mr. X," and therefore a very clever person) can drop the coin from your forehead into your waistcoat pocket. Press the threepenny-bit against your forehead, in a line with the pocket, until it adheres. Now pull open the pocket, and by moving your eyebrows the coin will fall as desired. Here comes the fun. You challenge one of your friends to repeat your performance. He accepts. You press the threepenny-bit very hard against his forehead, then take it away and say "there you are." His contortions to shake down the non-existent coin will be distinctly ludicrous.

The Mysterious Communication.

This is a very effective trick; it necessitates the use of a piece of glass, which need not be larger than a postcard.

Smear over one side of a piece of paper with ordinary yellow soap. Request a member of your audience to write a sentence on the clean side of this paper with a hard pencil, using the slab of glass as a writing-pad. Take the glass from him and lay it aside somewhere, but let him put the paper in your pocket without your seeing it. Now go as far from him as possible (in order to make the trick more effective). Make him hold one end of a piece of string against his forehead and think hard of the sentence he has written. Hold the other end against your own forehead, telling the audience that the sentence he has written will pass to you over this "telephone wire." Sure enough, to everybody's mystification, you will be able to reveal the message.

The trick is very simple. As you take the glass writing-pad you will notice that it bears a very faint impression of the writing. Wipe the sentence off before laying aside the glass.

The Climbing Ring.

The entertainer having obtained the loan of a ring, passes it over the end of his wand. He holds the wand upright and (marvel of marvels!) the ring is seen to climb slowly up and down his wand, stopping at intervals, and finally taking a flying leap into mid-air.

The trick is easy. Required: A thin, *black* stick, and a piece of fine black silk rather longer than the wand. Attach the thread to the stick by cutting a slit in the top of the latter and passing one end of the thread through it. A knot will prevent the silk from slipping out. The thread now hangs down the wand. Slip on the ring, hold the wand in your left hand, the thread in your right, and keep your right hand carelessly against your coat lapel. Now, by moving your left hand to and from your body the ring will slide up and down the stick in obedience to your words of command: "Up!" "Down!" "Stop!" "Jump!"

N.B.—If in evening dress, keep the stick away from your shirt-front, otherwise the thread may possibly show up.

LIMERICKS ON "MR. X."

[In August "Mr. X" offered prizes for the best "Limerick" on himself. The result was announced last month. A selection of amusing verses is given below.]

White-haired, with black coat-tails and "specs."
You stand, every brain to perplex:
With rhyme, jest, and riddle,
You pose, cheer, and diddle—
Your health, King of Wits, "Mr. X!"
(H. J. C. M., Scarborough.)

A great man is old "Mr. X."
Of fame he has reached the apex.
Full of humorous jollity,
Dearest old oddity,
Charming, in spite of his specs.
(H. L. M., London.)

Cried the fiend who is called "Mr. X,"
As he chuckled and polished his specs,
"Weird tasks I evolve
For my readers to solve,
From which they arise utter wrecks."
(C. A. E., Exmouth.)

There is an old fellow called "X,"
Who contrives all his readers to vex,
By trying to hoax
Respectable folks
With answers that no one expex.
(W. R., Coventry.)

Says that jolly old puzzler called "X,"
Y, Z.'s you must have on your necks,
For my riddles and sums
And smart con-un-drums
Are intended your noddles to vex.
(P. C., Manchester.)

"Mr. X" was a native of Ross,
His diet was cabbage and moss.
When they said, "Oh, how dry!"
He replied with a sigh,
"I sometimes have cutlets of hoss."
(R. P. M., Kent.)

A "Royal" old fellow named "X,"
On seeing the brain-shattered wrecks
Whom his problems had caught,
Of a sudden, bethought
Of manslaughter laws—and "made treks."
(T. G. F., Newark.)

A cunning old wizard named "X"
With puzzles his friends would perplex,
Till a desperate solver
Whipped out his revolver,
And "X" had to "hand in his checks."
(P. E. R., Ipswich.)

Sing the fame of "A Peer's Son," named "X,"
Born to baffle, bewilder, perplex:
In the "Royal" domain
May he long live to reign,
Though he claim not the title of "Rex."
(J. H. H., Lancs.)

ANATOMICAL.

SEBASTIAN: "I say, old chap, where would you go if you broke your knee?"

FERDINAND: "To a doctor."

SEBASTIAN: "Personally I should go to Africa?"

FERDINAND: "What ever for?"

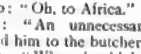
SEBASTIAN: "Because there, you'll find, the negroes (knee grows). And, by the way, where would you send your little brother if he broke his knee?"

FERDINAND: "Oh, to Africa."

SEBASTIAN: "An unnecessary expense. Why not send him to the butcher's?"

FERDINAND: "What should he go to the butcher's for?"

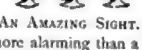
SEBASTIAN: "Kidneys" (kid knees).



AN AMAZING SIGHT.

What is more alarming than a waggonette overturned in a ditch?

Why, a brake (break) in the clouds.



WANTED! THREE SQUARES.

With four straight lines of equal length and four straight lines each one-half that length construct three similar squares.

WITH "MR. X'S" APOLOGIES.

What is the difference between a shady recess and a dog?

One is a bower, the other is bow-wow-er!

RESULTS.

WORDS WANTED

C R A N E
R I V A L
A V O I D
N A I V E
E L D E R

WANTED! THREE SQUARES:

APT ALLITERATIVE'S ARTFUL AID.—In the September ROYAL "Mr. X" offered a prize of Five Shillings for the best alliterative introduction to his pages. From time to time "Mr. X" hopes to make use of certain of the attempts sent in, but they were not, on the whole, very good; and "Mr. X" is consequently less liberal than usual with his remarks on prizes. The prize of Five Shillings is awarded to Miss M. A. Reynolds, 3 Queen Anne Houses, Bideford, Devon. Puzzle pamphlets, puzzle purses, or packs of ROYAL playing cards go to Miss E. A. Yeo, Glencar, Bull's Bridge, Dublin; Mr. H. J. Meynell, 228 St. Urbain, Montreal, Canada; and Mr. A. E. Kell, 131 Carlingford Road, Leeds.

LANDING MR PRENTICE

A Postal Paroxysm.

By
VIRGINIA MILES LEEDS.

I.

London, April 23rd.

MY DEAR MR. PRENTICE,

It will give me much pleasure if you will call. Certainly I remember meeting you at Scarborough two years ago, and it will be ever so nice to renew the acquaintance. I am always at home on Sunday afternoons.

Sincerely yours,
FLORENCE PENDLETON.

II.

April 24th.

DEAR NELL,

A Mr. Prentice—Edwin Prentice—whom I met at Scarborough two years ago, has written asking permission to call. I don't remember him from Adam—that was the summer I was so attentive to Fred and Walter—but I have answered granting him permission, and now look out for fun! This is an off season, and I am rather tired of the others. Poor Mr. Edwin Prentice! He doesn't know me yet.

Yours,
FLO.

III.

April 30th.

DEAR MR. PRENTICE,

It was so good of you to send those lovely roses. How did you know they were my favourites? Even as I write they are standing in a bowl at my side, and their fragrance fills the room, making me feel as though I were in one of old Omar's rose-gardens, instead of a prosaic London apartment. Do you remember the line from the Rubáiyát, "Look to the rose that blows about us?" Strange, is it not, how flowers and poetry seem to suggest each other? All this time, and I have not yet said "Thank you." But I say it now, many times, and assure you of my appreciation. Won't you dine with us on Wednesday evening, quite informally? Do; it will give us so much pleasure.

Yours very cordially,
FLORENCE PENDLETON.

IV.

May 1st.

DEAR NELL,

Mr. Edwin Prentice is coming to time beautifully. A big box of roses last Saturday, and to dine with us *en famille* Wednesday! He is really rather good-looking and parts his hair delightfully. He is in some banking business. Have you any idea how their salaries run? I wore my pink accordion-pleated *crêpe de Chine*, and he said pink was his favourite colour. What do you bet I won't land him? He admires me for my poetical (!!!) bent.

Yours in haste,
FLO.

V.

May 4th.

DEAR MR. PRENTICE,

Are you sure sure it would be quite proper without a chaperone? Of course, I should be delighted, and if you assure me that it will be entirely *comme il faut*, why—— At all events, I shall be ready at eight. The book of verses was gratefully received. I shall

By permission of the *New York Herald*.

mark them as you suggest. Shall I say nervously yours,

FLORENCE P.?

VI.

May 11th.

Coming on famously, Nell! He asked me to the theatre last week, and as mother was away we had to go unchaperoned—wasn't it awful? But such fun! He brought a bunch of violets, and the seats were in the second row. I wore my white cloth gown and big white hat. He certainly has an appreciation for clothes. I like him all but his nose; that's rather too big, and has a bump halfway down. But he does part his hair beautifully! He sent me a Shelley last week. Such a grind trying to wade through it!

It's really getting quite exciting! He is on a string certainly.

Expectantly,

FLO.

VII.

May 13th.

Are you quite sure it would be the thing to say Edwin instead of Mr. Prentice? You don't know how shy I feel about it. As I told you, it is my favourite name, but somehow my tongue seems to trip over it, and coming home the other night in the hansom I simply could not frame the word. But when you come to-morrow — you see, I have not forgotten that you are coming—I shall greet you with it instead of the usual formal way. It is needless to repeat how much I enjoyed the play and the evening. I am sure I was not lacking in expressions of appreciation, was I?

Shyly,

FLORENCE

Mr. Edwin Prentice is coming to dine beautifully. A big box of roses last Saturday, and to dine with us *en famille* Wednesday.

VIII.

I have become shy, Nell. He has asked me to call him Edwin, and he was all in a tremble when he asked it.

I looked coyly down—we were driving up Piccadilly after the theatre—and said falteringly that I would try, and all the time I meant to be calling him Ned inside of a week. The poor men—they consider themselves so bold and enterprising—they are not a patch on us girls, are they? He was afraid to say Florence, though I could see he was dying to, and I hadn't an earthly objection.

Poor old Ned! I would gladly spare him, but it's too late now, and I'm dead tired of the others. If I only knew how bank salaries ran! I'm twenty-four, and a mistake at this stage of the game would be fatal. You ask what I'm going to do with him. I haven't decided yet—shall have to lead him on a little further before I make up my mind. Never fear, though, that I won't keep you informed.

Yours always,

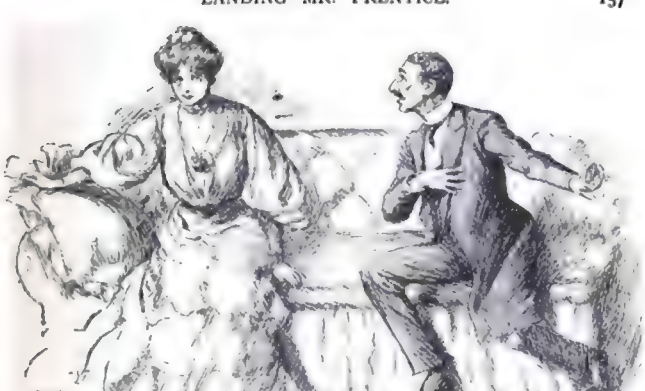
FLO.

IX.

May 19th.

DEAR NED,

You cannot imagine how strange and unexpected it is to be calling you that, but since it is your wish, it is, of course, my pleasure. Why, yes; I think it a jolly nice name, and I don't find it hard to say, exactly. I haven't decided yet about the bracelet. You see, I have never accepted anything from my men friends except books, flowers, and bonbons, and I don't know



Any way, he offered himself instead of the bracelet, and I tried not to be too keen in accepting.

whether I should be doing the right thing if I changed my principles. Of course, it seems different with you; but is it different? I shall have to consider. Yes, certainly, you may say

FLORENCE.

X.

May 21st.

DEAR NELL,

He wants to give me a bracelet with a sapphire and diamond—his stone and mine—and I'm just dying to accept it, for I have, as you know, a barbaric taste for ornaments, but I think it wise to hold off. I may get a ring by doing so, and a ring is so much more to show the girls than a bracelet. I must work it for the ring.

People are beginning to ask me if I'm engaged, and you know how it is—you may not want in the least to be engaged, but you hate like everything to have to confess you're not. Looks as if the man hadn't come to time, and I am determined that Ned shall come to time.

I haven't yet found out about his salary, and his nose still has the hump; but I'm twenty-four and getting older every minute. Mother is beginning to ask tiresome questions about "this Mr. Prentice," and that always stirs me into action. I wonder if I'd really like being engaged? The summer I was engaged to Fred and Walter was diverting at first, but got to be a horrid grind after a while.

Engagements are not all they are cracked up to be, and just as sure as you put your head in the noose another man comes along whom you're just dying to get up a flirtation with. Everything thus far has gone with a rush, but now I must go slow. What would you advise? You've had affairs of this sort yourself.

Your perplexed

FLO.

XI.

May 25th.

Oh, Ned, would it be unpardonable if I said, this is sudden? But it truly is; so sudden that I can scarcely find breath to answer. Perhaps other men have said the words, but somehow they seem new and different—coming from you!

How little I dreamed when you wrote one short month ago asking to call that fate was coming in at the door with you! Just as you say, there seems to be an affinity between us, and you are the first man I really ever cared for. Of course, there have been one or two

others—mere girlish fancies—but they don't count in the least. As soon as I saw you I felt there was something between us — a strange, indefinable something — which was as real as it was indefinable.

I am glad you wrote instead of putting the question to me personally, as you intended. It gives me an opportunity to reflect, and to give you my mature answer, instead of a first, rash, unconsidered one. Do not imagine for an instant that your salary of a thousand a year has any weight with me whatsoever, though it was thoughtful and considerate of you to mention that, too.

I have been thinking it over all night, keeping your letter in my hand the entire time for counsel, for, you see, until you put the question, I was not sure of my own heart. But now I realise that we were made for one another; we have the same taste in poetry and in other matters which will certainly insure our happiness through life, and so, sudden as it is, I send you my answer as suddenly, and that answer is "Yes."

Will it please you if I sign myself

YOUR FLORENCE?

XII.

May 25th.

Congratulate me, Nell.

I have landed him, and am going to be Mrs. Edwin Prentice! The way he came to time was beyond all expectations. I don't know whether it was my new frock that did the business, or because I held off about the bracelet.

Anyway, he offered himself instead of the bracelet, and I tried not to be too keen in accepting. He became confidential, and told me he had a thousand a year. Can't you see me, Nell, with a thousand a year? Sealskin coats, matinees, and motor-cars; I'll give you a dinner on your birthday, and you can invite young Lansing—that is, always providing he is still the only man you ever, etc., etc.

I can quite forget the lump on his nose when I think of the thousand. I told him his proposal was sudden, though I made up my mind the first day he entered the house, which was April 23rd, that he should propose before summer.

So, my dear girl, sit down and write me a touching letter of congratulation, for I deserve it if any girl ever did, after the way I've played my cards. I suppose I shall be asked next to choose the ring. Trust me for getting the best, and believe that the most tickled girl in all the world is your

FLO.

May 25th, evening.

P.S.—Oh, Nell! Nell! It's all up! What have I ever done to deserve such punishment? I wrote my acceptance to him and my last to you this morning, and in my excitement put them in the wrong envelopes! He has returned yours by a messenger and without a word, and has sent back my photo.

That means it's off!

How terrible, just when I had told all the girls and started the trousseau!

A thousand a year swept out of my reach in a moment. The blow will kill me. You don't recover from things at twenty-four as you do at nineteen.

I wonder if I could go in a convent?

Your utterly crushed and broken up

FLORENCE.

THE MODERN MAIDEN'S COURTSHIP.

He had sufficient courage found,
At last, to put a certain plea.
He shouted it, as best he could,
As we went swiftly o'er the lea.

I turned and answered him, but yet
He could not catch a single word,
With modesty, my faint reply
Was whispered gently, you've inferred?

Ah no! I spoke aloud, and he
Good hearing, I believe, enjoys.
The explanation is, in short—
My motor-car makes such a noise!

LESLIE THOMAS.

AN ARMY'S BLOODLESS VICTORIES

How the Church Army Helps the Outcast and Destitute.

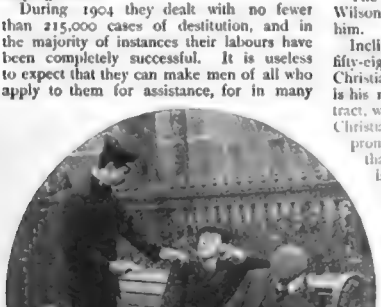
By John Glenfield.

The Rev. W. Carlile, founder of the Church Army.

The poor we have always with us, and, sad to say, the wicked as well. Whether legislation will ever be put in force to rid the country of these evils is a problem for statesmen to decide. But, in the meanwhile, steps are being taken by the Church Army to cleanse the wound as far as may be done by private efforts.

They work upon the principle of "help to the weak," and they make no distinction between the man who has been the victim of circumstances and his brother who has encountered misfortune through wrong-doing. If a man is willing to get upon his feet, the Church Army will offer him a helping hand.

During 1904 they dealt with no fewer than 215,000 cases of destitution, and in the majority of instances their labours have been completely successful. It is useless to expect that they can make men of all who apply to them for assistance, for in many cases the poor unfortunates have irretrievably lost their self-respect and will power.



A member of the Church Army rescuing a destitute man

The Army was founded by the Rev. Wilson Carlile, and it is still directed by him.

Inclined to agnosticism at twenty-six, at fifty-eight he is head of one of the most useful Christian organisations in the world. Such is his record. His conversion was due to a tract, which proved that those who professed Christianity were more enthusiastic in the promotion of philanthropic enterprises than any other class of people, and it is worth noting that the criterion of religion which he set up at that time has been his watchword ever since—"Good deeds."

He attended the London College of Divinity, and in his spare time held open-air meetings in the slum regions of the Surrey side. His studies completed, he obtained a curacy at Kensington; and, because the evening services were badly attended, he resolved that he must draw a congregation from the streets to fill the pews that his own proper parishioners saw fit to leave vacant. To this end he started week-night meetings beside the railway station in the High Street.

That was the beginning of the

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Church Army. He founded it in 1881 as a working-man's mission to working-men, but the scheme was sufficiently elastic to permit development in any direction that might seem advisable. To-day it is the best friend of the ex-prisoner, the drunkard, and the victim of exterior circumstances.

It is an essential part of Mr. Carlile's policy never to give indiscriminate charity, for he recognises that such a course merely tends to rob the recipient of self-reliance, and to make him a chronic pauper. His method is to provide work for the needy, and to help them to help themselves.

The Church Army has many spheres of activity, but perhaps the most interesting and useful is the Labour Homes which have been established all over the country, from Plymouth to Edinburgh, and from Norwich to Dublin.

In these institutions any man, no matter what his past may be, is offered board and lodging in return for his work. It was difficult for the promoters to find some profitable employment which might be undertaken without previous experience, but at length they hit upon firewood-chopping as the most likely to meet their requirements, for this does not require any great skill, and there is, moreover, an unfailing market for the little bundles which the men turn out.

In each home there are about twenty-five inmates. This number has been fixed upon as the greatest that the superintendent—or father, as he is called—can effectively watch over, and there can be no doubt but that his care is of the utmost importance, for it is the aim of the Army that every man shall leave the place morally fit. The usual time for a man to stay there is three months, less if a situation can be found for him before that time, and longer if it is necessary. He can, of course, leave at any time if he finds the labour irksome, and he will be dismissed if he does not comply with the rules; these, however, are of the easiest kind, and there is no reason why any man who is really anxious to reform should not submit to them.

One of the Army's reclaimed cases. (1) Shows him as he was rescued, (2) shows him at work on the Army's farm, and (3) about to sail for Canada, and begin life again

Every inmate must chop enough wood to pay the six shillings which is the sum charged for his week's keep. He is allowed a fair wage, neither more nor less than the standard payment for such work, and, if he earns more than the necessary six shillings, the remainder, after the deduction of a shilling per week, which he receives as pocket-money, will be banked for him pending the day when he will leave the home and start life afresh. The industrious thus have a fair sum to their credit when they leave the institution; the idle are not allowed to remain.

The food is of the best quality, and every

man is allowed to eat as much as he likes, for it is recognised that good work cannot be expected from the hungry. Each inmate has a comfortable bed, and in most cases a separate cubicle. The surroundings are cheerful, and the fact that the men voluntarily remain in the place where hard work is exacted from them is a proof that the efforts of the society are appreciated.

Occasionally, however, a case of gross ingratitude does crop up. One man had been in the home for a month, and the superintendent, thinking he could be trusted, sent him to deliver a load of wood. Perhaps the reformation was not complete; perhaps a sudden temptation presented itself. The man sold the wood and decamped, leaving the horse and cart in a yard. He has not been heard of since that day.

Paying for their lodging. One of the Army's wood-chopping sheds.

On another occasion a one-armed man, ragged and filthy, sought admittance. His deformity made him practically useless so far as wood-chopping was concerned, so he was given the lighter task of being orderly in a lodging home. One day he was reproved for idleness, and in the evening it was found that he had decamped with most of the lodgers' clothes.

Such cases are rare, but they show the nature of the soil on which the Church Army has set itself to work.

To those about to be released from gaol special attention is given. This work is directed by Mr. Colin Campbell, who is authorised by the Home Secretary to pay periodical visits to Dartmoor, Borstal, Portland, and Parkhurst. During these visits he interviews all convicts who are about to be set at liberty, and gives them the opportunity of coming to a Labour Home on their release. If they consent to do so, they go direct to the Society on discharge, that they may run no chance of breaking away from their good resolution and returning to their old companions.

It is part of our modern convict system to teach the prisoner a trade by which he may earn an honest living on his return to the outer world, but it is not in the power of the authorities to insure that he will obtain a situation, for most employers of labour strongly object to engaging an ex-convict, and many men would refuse to work by his side. To meet this difficulty the Church Army take him in hand for three months, by the end of which time he will have recovered his moral tone and be able to look his fellow-men in the face.

Even when he has completed his stay in the Labour Home, there is still the danger that he may return to his old haunts. To prevent this lodging homes have been established, where a man may have a comfortable room and good food for a weekly payment of ten or twelve shillings, and be under the watchful eye of an agent of the society, who will assist him in any way possible.

It has been found by experience that ex-prisoners well repay the trouble and expense lavished upon them, and in the majority of cases they resume their position as respectable members of the community. The importance of this work will be better understood when it is stated that last year the society dealt with almost two thousand ex-prisoners, and made the majority of them honest men.

A happy occasion. The married men at one of the Army's homes.

All sorts and conditions of men come to the society for assistance. The tramp rubs shoulders with the man who was once an officer in a crack cavalry regiment; the professional pickpocket speaks to the broken-down clergyman upon terms of perfect equality. During the past year there have been more inmates from the professional classes than ever before; the reason for the increase is hard to find, but it is vaguely attributed to the general slackness of trade. Men who have sufficient education are generally given some sort of clerical work, such as envelope addressing, instead of the more plebeian wood-splitting, but whatever the task set them, they must do it thoroughly, for they have to earn their dinner before they eat it.

Married men are not obliged to live in while working at a Labour Home. Their earnings are paid to them in full, but steps are taken to see that those depending upon them receive the benefit of the money, and not the publicans.

In winter the demands on the society are so great that it is impossible to accommodate a quarter of the applicants in the ordinary Labour Homes. Hence arrangements have to be made with the owners of selected lodging-houses to provide beds for all who furnish a ticket from the Church Army. This plan enabled them last winter to supply with beds five thousand men nightly who would otherwise have been compelled to wander about till morning. "Relief Yards" are also established to meet the needs of special occasions; in them a man may earn a meal by doing a certain amount of work, and a bed by completing a further task. Nothing is given absolutely free.

In the early part of 1905 the King summoned Mr. Carlile to Buckingham Palace, and, as a mark of his entire sympathy with the work, presented him with a hundred pounds towards the funds of the organisation. With this sum the King's Labour Tents were set up on a piece of vacant ground near the Strand, lent for the occasion by the County Council. In these tents work was provided for eight hundred men a day, enabling them to earn a couple of good meals and a bed. A hundred could be accommodated at a time, and these worked for three hours, making room for another set when their task

was finished. In this way the tents were kept full day and night. Altogether the winter operations provided two million meals and half a million beds.

Queen Alexandra has recently given a fresh proof of her sympathy with the poor by forwarding £50 to the Church Army, with a request that it may be devoted to opening a Relief Yard for the unemployed in West Ham, to be called "The Queen's Labour Yard."

An interesting part of the work is the dispatch of suitable men to the colonies. It has been proved that in many cases this is by far the best plan for preventing the reformed criminal from returning to his evil ways, for by this method he leaves his past behind him, with his old companions and the temptations they might lay before him. A Test Farm is kept up at Newdigate in Surrey, and here candidates for emigration are taught those things that will be useful to them in the colonies, and it is ascertained whether or not their reformation has been complete, for the society has no desire to ship undesirables to other countries.

The Old Clothes Department serves a useful purpose. Garments of all descriptions are sent in by sympathisers, and are sold at a nominal figure to those in need of them. Many of the inmates of the homes arrive in an absolutely destitute condition, and it would be impossible for them to obtain a situation dressed as they are.

The Church Army has a purely evangelistic as well as a social side. They train their own assistants, first by a probation on one of the vans which tour the country, and afterwards by a three months' course at one of the training homes. When the candidate has passed an examination by the Bishop of London's examiner, he is ready to take up the regular work of the society. Apart from the probation, the women candidates have practically the same training.

Prisoners' wives and families are assisted to find suitable employment, and missions are organised for the benefit of any class that may seem to require them.

The form of religion propounded in the various institutions is that of the Church of England, but it is never obtruded, although the whole atmosphere is essentially a religious one.

As the Prison Commissioners say in their latest Blue Book, the Church Army has grown by steady and cautious development into one of the great reclaiming influences of the age.

Scene in a Recreation Room in one of the Church Army's Labour Homes.

PICTURE PARAGRAPHS.

Readers, Especially Those Living Abroad or in the Colonies, are Cordially Invited to Contribute to These Pages. Payment is Made for all Contributions Used.

The lying in state of the most famous cat the world has ever seen. Over seven hundred letters were received at its funeral.

THE WORLD'S MOST FAMOUS FELINE.

A Cat that Lay in State.

This pussy is not altogether prepossessing to look at, but since he weighed thirty pounds while in the flesh, his outline lacked that beautiful symmetry it doubtless possessed when he was young.

Philadelphia, U.S., had the honour of containing the cat in question. They do things on a large scale in the States, and so he enjoyed the daintiest fare and reposed on silk and satin. His portrait was painted by a famous artist, and such was pussy's fame that a letter addressed to him at Philadelphia, U.S., without the name either of his street or house, reached him without delay. He carried off a heavy solid gold medal, the only one of its kind ever awarded, at the Madison Square Cat Show in 1895. It is sad to think that such a cat had to die, like a common or garden specimen of his species; but, alas! this was unavoidable.

However, it was worth while dying to have a funeral such as his was. His obsequies were characterised by all the pomp and circumstance which accompany the funeral of a king. He was extended on a satin pillow, which was placed on the top of a white enamelled cage in which he was exhibited in New York. A silk shroud trimmed with lace covered this pillow, and flowers surrounded the body. Hundreds of mourning friends came to witness the "lying in state," and over seven hundred letters of condolence were received from all parts of the world.

This touching devotion to a poor dumb animal is a powerful proof of the existence of fine feelings among the men and women of to-day. The mourners were actuated by no ulterior motives, since it was not in the power of the cat to benefit them in any way when alive, and certainly not when dead.

A GREAT FEAT IN GLASS-BLOWING.

The Largest Bottles in the World.

The accompanying illustration shows four bottles, the largest ever made either in the Occident or in the Orient. A man over six feet high stands below the top of the tallest one, their height ranging from five feet four inches to six feet four inches.

Three of the most expert glass-blowers known were employed in the construction of these remarkable bottles, which were manufactured in America. It took fifty pounds of liquid glass to make the largest one. This was drawn, rolled, and inflated, the blowpipe used being five and one-half feet in length.

The largest bottles in the world. The man is over six feet high; the height of the bottles ranges from five feet four inches to six feet four inches.

To complete the process, it was necessary to re-heat the material several times, owing to the great quantity needed. It took about an hour to shape the bottle. Then the rings at the mouth were finished, and the glass annealed in specially large ovens.

At its greatest width the largest bottle is thirty inches in diameter, and it will hold fifty-five gallons. Even the smaller ones are of greater dimensions than any bottles ever made before. These are intended for "wholesale" perfumery. A single one will hold the contents of nearly 1500 of the ordinary sized perfumery bottles used on toilet tables.

The large one, the wine bottle, represents the capacity of 250 ordinary pint bottles.

The history of the final disposition of these immense glass bottles is interesting.

A great feat in glass-blowing was not sought for at the start. The idea was to try an experiment in show-window display, two of the bottles being designed for perfumery, another for wine, and another for toilet water.

It was meant, of course, to produce something out of the ordinary in the style of glass bottles, but no such result as followed was looked for. The bottles, however, attracted so much attention when they were finished that it was thought best to keep them as a permanent exhibit.

There are about 400 glass factories in the United States now. Since the first factory was established in Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A., in 1847, the business has developed rapidly, until now the value of the glass produced in the country is estimated at over £5,000,000.

The antiquity of glass bottles shows conclusively that they have always been uninterruptedly in general use to the present day. Egypt left us bottles of simple glass, and glass bottles covered with wicker-work or papyrus stalks are still used by the Egyptians under the name of "Hamad-jam."

The old Romans used glass bottles identical with those we now have, and everything goes to show that the manufacture of glass bottles has always been carried on.

France manufactures annually some 60,000 tons of glass bottles. Each boule weighs about two pounds three ounces.

WAX-FARMING IN CHINA.

Among the industries flourishing in the Celestial Kingdom which are but little known to the outside world is that of wax-farming.

The peculiar feature of this particular occupation is that the farmer's entire crop is produced by the free labour of myriads of little insects.

Their eggs and cocoons, deposited on branches, yield a plentiful harvest, which is transformed into pure white wax, and then sold at a fair price.

The midnight journeys of the sure-footed insect-porters, who have their heads completely muffled up, and are clad in a most remarkable and astonishing manner, are very fantastic.

With loads of insects on their backs, these men travel hundreds of miles across rocky mountain passes where no animal could safely tread.

The cultivation of wax and the preparation of it for the market furnishes employment for a large number of industrial workers. These convert the wax into candles for house and street-lanterns. They also manufacture it into temple images and other articles for ceremonial worship, and it is used as furniture polish, and for imparting a gloss to silk.

A tax tribute of white wax is sent every year to Pekin from the Province of Sze-Chuan.

A porter carrying wax-making insects to their breeding-place.

CURIOUS DAMAGE BY ICE.

This remarkable damage was caused by the salt water freezing between the ebb and flood tides around the piles supporting the structures. The ice gripped these piles with great firmness, and as the tide rose the piles rose also. When the tide fell, the weight of the surrounding ice caused that around the piles to break away. Another frost again froze the water around the piles, and thus the operation was repeated.

All the piles under the main buildings, where greater pressure existed, remained intact. The reason was that their weight overbalanced the clinging force of the ice. The damage done by ice to light structures often involves the loss of a considerable sum of money.

The uplifting of buildings by ice in Jamaica Bay, New York.

THE BERSAGLIERI.

Italy's Smartest Soldiers.

In the armies of most nations there are certain regiments whose names are a household word among their fellow-countrymen.

The Guards enjoy this enviable distinction in the British Army. "The Guards"—the very name sends a martial thrill through the breasts of Young England.

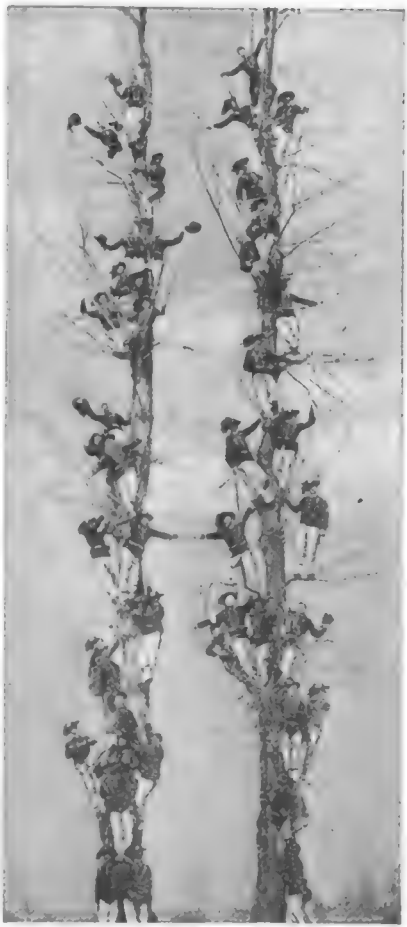
In France a tremendous amount of admiring hero-worship is accorded to the Zouaves, whose jaunty swagger and devil-may-care bearing has earned them the nickname of "*Les enfants perdus.*" And thunders of cheering always greet the "lost children" when they march past at a review.

The Bersaglieri are the darlings of the Italian public. This swagger regiment is regarded as the cream of Italy's fighting men, and there is very keen competition for enrolment in its ranks.

Every Italian has to serve a certain period either in the Army or the Navy, from the age of twenty to thirty-nine. The pick of the recruits join the Bersaglieri, which regiment is famous for its remarkable headdress and its athletic prowess. Like the American infantry (of music hall and variety entertainment fame) the Bersaglieri are able to scale walls, form pyramids, and accomplish other gymnastic feats, with extraordinary skill.

The regiment is specially used for scouting operations, and when charging, presents a very fine appearance. The Bersaglieri march with a peculiar lilting swing, which is quite distinct from the German Parade March, or any other military step.

If skill in climbing and general recklessness go for anything, there is trouble in store for any of Italy's foes who have to tackle the Bersaglieri.



A showy evolution by the Bersaglieri, the smartest corps in the Italian Army.

AN ICE BICYCLE.

THE ice-bicycle seeks to combine the joys of sleighing and cycling. That it has not achieved wide popularity may perhaps be due to its not having achieved all its inventor anticipated. The principle of its construction is fairly simple. The large wheel in the centre is revolved by the rider in the ordinary manner. This action causes sprockets, or cogs, to catch in the ice, and thus propel the whole contrivance. The labour involved in riding such a steed appears to be considerable, and until the advent of the motor-ice-bicycle, ice-cycling will continue to be the sport of the few. The skating public are likely to prove hostile to a vehicle of this kind, since the sprockets would dig comfortable little graves in the ice, sufficient to lay low the most valiant skater.

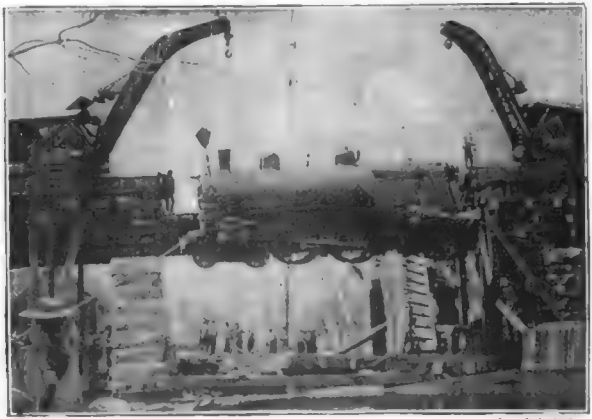
An ice-bicycle. The revolution of the wheel causes sprockets to catch in the ice, thus propelling the machine.

LIFTING A LOCOMOTIVE.

THIS strange accident recently occurred on a branch of the Pennsylvania Railway System, running through the town of Laurel, Del. At this place the track crosses a navigable stream on a bridge, the rails being about twenty-five feet above the water. The centre span of the bridge is a draw span.

Through a misunderstanding of signals, the driver of a passenger train ran his train on to the bridge before he perceived that the draw span was raised, and the engine fell through into the water. The coupling fortunately broke, and the train remained on the rest of the bridge. The schooner, *Golden Gate*, was passing beneath the bridge at the time, so that a collision occurred.

The engine was replaced on the rails by means of two wrecking cranes.



A specimen of the work done by break-down gangs—two powerful cranes lifting wrecked engine.

FEEDING A BABY GIRAFFE.

For five years a couple of giraffes have lived in harmony in the Zoological Gardens in Berlin. Then the rare occurrence took place of the birth of a baby giraffe. The young animal is a female, and had the respectable weight of 111 lb. To keep this small giraffe alive became rather a difficult matter, as the mother felt no inclination to fulfil her duties towards her offspring.

A keeper has now been found who is already very familiar with the baby, which is kept apart from her parents, and receives daily five pints of milk. This, of course, will have to be increased, as the "infant" is apparently growing quickly. She already tries to chew some cakes and hay, and is a great attraction, as all the children wish to see her.

The care of wild animals born in captivity is a very onerous and delicate task. The young beasts are very seldom brought up successfully, and usually die in spite of all the attention bestowed upon them. This giraffe, however, seems intent on supplying in itself the exception that proves the rule, for it is at present very healthy. It would be a great triumph for the officials of the Berlin Zoological Gardens to rear it successfully, and they are naturally doing their best.

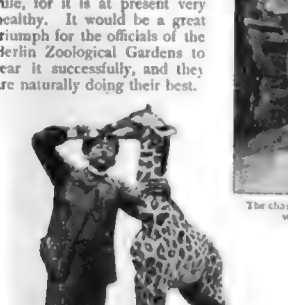


Photo [illegible], Berlin.
Feeding a baby giraffe in the Berlin Zoo.

The champion newsboy cyclist.

The champion Billingsgate weight-lifter.

CHAMPIONS OF EVERY-DAY LIFE.

To be a news-cyclist asks no small amount of daring, as anybody may observe for himself. One of these news-cyclists, perhaps the best known of the fraternity, is "Liddy," by nickname, the champion of the brigade, who bears the *Sun* in his satchel, and shows all the shrewdness and grit of a clever Londoner. Nerve is needed beyond the ordinary for this task. To sustain the weight of a batch of papers, weighing over one hundredweight, asks no small skill, and speaks for itself in the matter of endurance, and the exercise of the faculties of adjustment and guidance.

Another example of professional ability to be seen any day is the art of little Jack Green, the champion weight-lifter of Billingsgate, well known to every man in the market, and spoken of by them with pride, both for his youth and capacity.

Jack Green is only a youth of about fifteen years, is a very good swimmer, diver, and has gained many prizes for aquatic prowess; but the finest feat of all is the ease with which the little fellow carries on his head burdens whose average weight, as any of his colleagues will proudly inform you, is from one to one-and-a-half hundredweights. Jack works for the Steam Packet Co., and is generally on duty as porter from six to nine in the morning.

KATHIE SLUMBERS

Core of my heart, sleep on!
And dream of love:
The sea is of an em'rald hue -
The sky is blue above -*And Kathie slumbers.*

Out 'neath the summer sun
We gaily float,
And tiny wavelets, edged with bronze,
Play round the old-world boat -- *And Kathie slumbers.*

The seagulls scream around,
And insects drone:
The faint, luxuriant, brackish breeze
On gilded waves makes moan -- *And Kathie slumbers.*

Sing ye, O breeze, a song --
A lullaby,
To echo through my loved one's dream --
Murmur to her of me *And Kathie slumbers.*

Her wand ring ringlets play
Around her head;
They stray o'er pink and marbled cheeks,
And kiss the dainty red--*And Kathie slumbers.*

The dreaming ecstasy
Of drift and flow;
The gentle heaving of the deep,
The swaying to and fro *Makes Kathie slumber.*

O, waken, Kathie mine,
Let slumber flee;
O, let us steer our barque for shore--
I've wearied of the sea--*But Kathie slumbers.*

O, waken, sweetheart mine,
And view the night,
The gloaming a wrapt the rising sea
In dreamy, faded light *And Kathie slumbers.*

O, wake, my love, my heart!
Leave now thy bower;
O, hang the girl! she doesn't know
The boat is paid by hour

AND KATHIE SLUMBERS.

J. Wallace MacGregor.

A·NIGHT WITH·A NATURALIST

The History of a Delusion.

By Fox Russell.

Wormington is a naturalist of great renown, and his discourses on the ways of the common or garden beast, bird, or reptile are "familiar in the mouth as household words." "You must run down and see my little place, one night. I have quite a collection of live stock I'd like to show you," he said; "if you're fond of animals you'll like my small menagerie."

We settled details, and on the following Thursday I presented myself at Butterfly Cottage, a charming house in the suburbs, in time to dress for dinner, and was cordially welcomed by my host, who came to the door and took my bag from me with his own hands.

"We're rather short of servants, my dear fellow," he explained; "our parlourmaid left us without notice, this morning, after a spirited encounter with the monkey in the dust-hole; and, as the new boot-boy positively refused to go in and rake over the gravel in the bear's den, I was obliged to discharge him—the boy, I mean, not the bear. However, we'll make you as comfortable as possible, if you'll excuse our being unavoidably shorthanded. Come into the study, and mind you don't tread on the tortoise; it's generally lying on the doormat—that's it. My wife will give you a cup of tea, and then I'll take you to your room."

And after being introduced to Mrs. Wormington, and declining the proffered cup of tea, I prepared to follow my host upstairs.

Passing bird and squirrel cages innumerable on either side of the hall, Wormington led the way, and I was shown into a very comfortably furnished bedroom on the first floor.

"Like the parrot in here to keep you amused?" asked my host, pointing to a cage in which a fine, grey bird was perching. Hate parrots, but could hardly say so. I merely smiled, and murmured, "Delighted."

Then Wormington left the room and the parrot took me in hand.

"Got a bald pate, mister," he said, with one beady eye fixed on me.

My head is *not* bald. The hair, I admit, is getting thin on the crown, but that is quite another matter.

"Scratch a poll, Polly," I said, thinking it was the usual remark to make on the subject.

"Scratch a bald pate, mister," he retorted uncompromisingly.

I did not encourage the creature in this line of argument, but went on dressing for dinner. The bird seemed annoyed at my

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lack of appreciation, and relapsed into silence.

I had reached that climax of man's dressing trials, the final struggle with the white tie, before the silence was again broken—this time, I regret to say, by a hasty expression on the recalcitrancy of white cravats in general and my own in particular, as I ruined, and then threw away the second. Then the parrot capped my exclamation by a strange, sailor-man's "swear-word" of somewhat startling nature.

I declined to take any notice, and having succeeded with the third tie, proceeded to put on my "claw-hammer." Unfortunately, the tails, as I swung the coat out behind me, hit the cage, and instantly the bird, with a reckless disregard of all the decencies of life, poured out on my devoted (but *not* bald) head, a torrent of invective, a string of appalling epithets which would have stung a coster to envy, and brought blushes to the cheek of a Thames bargee. I walked hastily downstairs to the drawing-room.

I was evidently early, for neither Wormington nor my hostess were present. So, after a casual glance at some fine Landseers hanging on the walls, I dropped into an armchair by the fire.

But I dropped out of it again instantly. An unearthly sound from the depths of the cushioned seat beneath me—something between a squeak and a groan—coupled with an agonising "nip," caused me to hurriedly spring to my feet just as Mrs. Wormington entered the room.

"Good gracious!" she screamed, "you've sat on the marmoset!"

And, rushing up to the chair, she drew from the cushions a diminutive monkey, grinning and chattering—whether in ferocity or mirth I could not determine.

"I'm glad it was not a baby," I began by way of apology, though I was still smarting from the "nip" inflicted by the little brute, and I daresay I infused a certain amount of sarcasm into my tones.

"Oh, pray don't apologise!" said my hostess, "it was my husband's fault for forgetting to chain him up. We usually leave him loose until dinner-time as he likes to play with the —— Oh, just hold him for a moment!" she suddenly broke off, thrusting the jabbering, hideous little creature into my

Brain . . was allowed to perambulate the dining-room and shake hands with us all.

arms, "there's the squirrel drinking out of the inkpot!"

Fresh from my painful experience, the reader will readily believe that I handled that—I must say it—*beastly* monkey with a certain amount of misgiving. However, by the time my hostess had smacked the squirrel's head, put it in its cage, and returned for the marmoset, no actual harm had been done.

The little brute had contented itself with taking out my watch and dropping it on the table with a bang that broke the mainspring; he also placed one dirty paw on my shirt front. But, compared with what I had anticipated, these things were "trifles light as air."

Then Wormington arrived, and we went in to dinner, after he had secured the monkey to the leg of a table with a collar and chain.

A most excellent repast and some "Moet '89" almost obliterated the memory of my evil entreatment. Halfway through dinner my host observed cheerfully:

"We'll have the bear in at dessert; *he'll* keep us lively!"

He did. I never felt more on the *qui vive* in my life than during the ten minutes Bruin—thank goodness! on a chain—was allowed to perambulate the dining-room and shake hands with us all—a proceeding which, if distasteful to the bear, was positively terrifying to me.

The chief topic of conversation at dinner was, as may well be imagined, the idiosyncracies and habits of birds, beasts, and reptiles—especially reptiles. Ugh! the mention of them made me shudder!

I ventured on an expression of mild disapproval, once or twice.

"Don't you ever get into trouble," I asked, "through these creatures temporarily escaping?"

"They never—or very seldom—escape. The only exception to that rule was in the case of a very valuable snake——"

"A what?" I said anxiously.

"A snake—rather a large specimen—*Anguis Strangularius*—which escaped from me about a week ago."

"And how long did it remain at large?" I asked.

"Ah, that's the unfortunate part of the story. It's still missing," he answered, sipping his first glass of port.

I put mine down untasted.

"Er—where do you suppose, now—" I strove to speak in disinterested tones, though my hair was slowly rising up of it's own accord —"that he—it—the—the reptile has got to?"

"Impossible to say," replied Wormington, handing me the cigars. "It was a serious loss to me; had to pay a great deal of money for him in the Ratcliff Highway. Talking of Ratcliff, reminds me—do you like rats? If so, I've some rather good specimens of the piebald——"

I hastened to assure him that I had no hobby for rats. Then I tried to lead the conversation back to the missing *Anguis Strangularius*—the subject interested me deeply—as I was to sleep the night in the house.

"Er—touching that snake—er—" I began.

"Touching it? No, I don't advise touching it," responded Wormington, entirely mistaking my meaning. I fear he is an obtuse man.

"No," I broke in, "I meant that—that—isn't it—er—a trifle risky to have a live snake—of—of—of errant disposition, and robust proportions—in the house, loose?"

I think the room must have grown very hot, for a clammy perspiration was breaking out upon my brow.

My host noticed this, and suggested a turn in the garden; but with visions of *Anguis Strangularius* before me perhaps cantering round the lawn, I declined, without even stopping to think the matter over.

"Then you don't know whereabouts he—it—the insect—reptile, I mean—may be, at present?" I persevered.

"No more notion than you have yourself, my dear boy," he answered, with engaging frankness.

Nice fellow, Wormington — thoroughly hearty and so forth—still, I must say I——

"Sorry you don't like rats," he went on. "Down in the cellar I have a very large bandicoot from Australia, which might interest you. It is a perfect specimen of——"

But *something* at that moment touched me on the leg. I involuntarily jumped from my seat.

Wormington laughed easily.

"Oh, my dear fellow, pray don't be alarmed; it's only the mongoose! He's always loose about the house."

Not entirely reassured, as I do not approve of mongooses—or should one say mongeese?—I resumed my seat. But, really, these weird surroundings were gradually getting on my nerves. I made one final effort to bring the conversation round to the subject of the missing serpent.

"Er—when snakes of the *Anguis Sanguinarius*—I mean *Strangularius*—variety find themselves at large in a house, do they—er

I frantically tried to free my mouth, at the same time dashing out of bed towards the door.

—seek the cellars, or prefer to travel upstairs?" I asked.

"No telling—impossible to predict," replied Wormington carelessly; "but if you're at all nervous you shall have the mongoose running loose in you're bedroom to-night—they're great snake-killers."

The mongoose!—I thought the remedy would be worse than the disease.

"Er—thanks, no," I replied, looking furtively under the table in search of the eerie beast in question. "I—I am rather in a f—rather averse to snakes, that is—and—er—I should like, if you don't mind, to—to conduct a strict search—er—I should say, I should like *you* to conduct a strict search—in my room—just as a measure of precaution—before I retire to bed to-night."

"Certainly, my dear chap," responded Wormington heartily—"but I'm sure you need not be at all alarmed—our friend *Anguis Strangularius* is either dead, or far away, by this time; they're great wanderers."

I gulped down my port wine. Then, at the risk of being thought tiresome, I observed:

"How—er—how do these reptiles—er—attack their prey?"

"Oh, by winding themselves round the victim's neck and crushing him. Hence the name *Strangularius*," he said, in cheery tones, which sounded to me somewhat cold-blooded.

Soon after this we left the table for the drawing-room, and, after a little music, sat down to play picquet.

"You'd like, the green parrot to sit on your arm, wouldn't you, it's so tame?" said Mrs. Wormington, and before I could assure her that I preferred seeing the green parrot at a distance, she had fetched that revolting fowl and placed it on my shoulder.

For an hour I continued to play cards, in momentary fear of having my left ear bitten off. When bedtime arrived, I thought I had never felt more lively and unlike sleeping, in my life before.

True to his promise, my genial host accompanied me upstairs, and, candle in hand, routed in the deepest recesses of the cupboards, shook out the curtains, and again generously offered me the services of the mongoose. Upon my once more declining

them, he shook hands and gave me these parting words of advice :

"Don't worry yourself about the snake—I don't suppose for an instant he's here—though of course one can't make an absolute *certainty* of anything—so if you *should* see him, by any remote chance, come in and fetch me—you'd better not tackle him yourself."

And I gave this promise with the utmost readiness.

I stripped every rag off the bed before I could make up my mind to get into it, and even then it was with a cold shudder that I laid my head upon the pillow. Once let me get through the night — and catch me at Butterfly Cottage again!

I hastily blew out the light, and pulled the bedclothes over my head—but for long, sleep refused to visit my aching eyes. Each flutter of the curtains sent a chill down my back, and when a newspaper slipped gently off the dressing-table on to the floor, I could have shrieked aloud.

At length, however, I became more restful, my eyelids drooped, and sleep visited my worn-out frame. I dropped off into a dreamy slumber, and was temporarily at peace.

I must have slept on thus for some hours. Then slowly, but none the less certainly, did I become aware of *something* wreathing itself in loose coils round my throat.

As in a flash, I remembered the escaped reptile!—it was an awful moment—the coils grew tighter and yet tighter, and now part of the "thing" lay over my mouth, seriously affecting my breathing. Wormington's words—"*they kill by winding themselves round the victim's neck*," rose vividly before me.

The perspiration broke out on my forehead—I could not call out—often had I heard of the deadly fascination of snakes over their helpless victims, but I had never known that this could be exercised in the dark. Then I made a desperate effort to steady myself. Surely this was a dream—some hideous nightmare!—"The baseless fabric of this vision," as Shakespeare says—I was not really awake—I——

Suddenly the old clock in the hall down below, hoarsely chimed the hour of three. Great Powers! then I *was* awake! This was no dream! no vision, but a horrible, hideous reality. There was no longer any room for doubt; the thing enfolding my neck and head, was—must be—*Anguis Strangularius* itself!!!

With a Herculean effort I struggled up—instantly the coils tightened round my neck—I felt myself going black in the face—then I frantically tried to free my mouth, at the same time dashing out of bed towards the door. Still struggling with the awful thing which no effort of mine could shake off, I gave a prolonged shriek, and for a moment or two I knew no more. Then, sounds as of footsteps rapidly approaching broke on my overstrained senses — the door was burst open, and my host, candle in hand, rushed in.

"Save me!" I gasped, still wrestling madly with the enveloping coils. And then Wormington, setting down the candle, said :

"My dear fellow, you appear to be under some extraordinary delusion. You are wrestling, not with the missing *Anguis Strangularius*, but with the bedclothes, which you seem to have got twisted tightly round your neck. The only danger you are in is that of suffocating yourself with the sheets and blankets!"

* * * * *

Breakfast next morning was not an enlivening function. My host did his level best to incubate small talk, but the memory of my recent wrestle with the bedclothes had eaten into my soul and corroded my sense of humour. I left early for town, in silence and a four-wheeler. Butterfly Cottage will know me no more.

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A WINTER GYMKHANA

Start of the "wheelbarrow race." The "barrows" have a skate-blade in each hand, and are "wheeled" by a comrade.

Ice Sports in Grindelwald.

By A. Stronach.

We had been three weeks in Grindelwald, and were spoiling for something novel—even the American girls who had only one fault to find with tobogganing, that you couldn't ever get enough of it. So, when one night at dinner the silent man, who spoke only when he had something to say, suggested a gymkhana on the ice, we had difficulty in refraining from falling on his neck and hugging him.

A committee, with the inspired silent man as president, was hastily formed, with power to add to its numbers, and authority to fix the gymkhana for New Year's eve.

At last, one memorable morning, the "gymkhaneers," as we called them, produced their programme. Immediately the rink was requisitioned for preliminary practisings. The cook was heard to complain in broken English that her potatoes were annexed by those who were entering for the potato race. An American girl, when I met her arm-in-arm on the ice with the handsome young Scotch doctor who had come out in attendance on an eccentric baronet, explained that they were practising for the "cigarette and umbrella race," only, being economical, they were saving their umbrellas and cigarettes.

The madcap schoolgirl of our party, being assured that a valuable prize was being offered for cartwheels on the ice, was discovered at all hours standing on her head, and the curlers grumbled that their precincts were invaded by lunatics in sacks,

Shovel race. A lady seated on a snow shovel is propelled across the course by her partner. They then change places, and the lady pushes her shovelful of man to the winning post.

land by asses who called themselves "wheelbarrows."

The "Wheelbarrow race" was great sport — for the spectators — though the "barrows," all with a skate blade in either hand, their legs held by a comrade in skates, got very red in the face before they reached the winning post.

To steer a team of blindfolded "horses" zig-zag through a track lined with bottles without knocking down a bottle, was a feat which, in spite of much preliminary practising, only Dr. Mac performed in triumph. A race which gave fiendish joy to us onlookers was the potato race, and no camera could do justice to the couples, who, arm in arm, skated gaily over the course and knocked heads together in their efforts to cull a row of potatoes near the finish and carry them, without dropping any, to the winning post.

Our champion lady skater, who was a member of the Bath Club, was responsible for the suggestion of the prize for "solving a problem." She had described the naiads of Mayfair wrinkling their fair brows over simple addition at the annual tournament in the green tank at the back of Dover Street.

A Cambridge professor, with a sarcastic smile in his spectacled eyes, had set the problems, and placed them in their envelopes for distribution among the ladies, who squatted on the ice in a ring. He assured us that they were all of the simplest order, and gave us a sample: "A lady goes to pay her milliner"—some of us, remembering the

Race for ladies. Driving a four-in-hand team of men on skates.

The "solving a problem" competition. The ladies are seated in a ring and given a problem in a sealed envelope. At the word "Go!" the envelopes are opened. Having solved the problem, the competitor must skate to the winning post with the solution.

Blindfold driving. The driver of the "horses," who are blindfolded, has to steer his team on a zigzag course between rows of bottles. Knocking down a bottle disqualifies

ways of Mayfair, looked sceptical—but he continued to tell how the lady explained to her milliner that she would not lose anything by taking a penny off her bill, whereas the lady would gain a penny. What was the amount of the bill?

We gave it up, but a little Girton girl—someone said she was senior wrangler of her year—skated up in triumph with the answer, "*f*2," and we took the word of the professor for it that she was right. Though, as the American girl said, what milliner would let you have a two-pound hat on credit?

The American girl came off victor in the ladies' driving race, keeping her team of four men on skates well in hand without undue use of the whip that she flourished. She had her choice of manly steeds for her toboggan in the chariot race, and sat like a queen while they drew her to the winning post.

The two most amusing races of the day were the shovel race and the cigarette and umbrella race. There had been some heart-burning for days before over the preference shown by the ladies entered for the shovel race for small and puny light-weights, and the American girl and the doctor had nearly quarrelled seriously when she selected as her shovelful of man a dapper little Frenchman who had long been trying to get an innings.

The Frenchman smiled triumphantly when the muscular doctor was put on one side, but the doctor had his revenge when a Scotch Amazon shoveled him in triumph to the winning-post, right in front of the American girl, whose foreigner managed to get spilt, after seriously endangering his partner's neck in the first heat, where the men shovel the ladies across the course.

But apparently the fair American and the doctor made it up before the cigarette and umbrella race came on—you have to skate with an umbrella open and a lit cigarette in your mouth—for they came up smiling, she with her best umbrella, and the doctor's was the only cigarette really alight.

Potato race. Competitors link arms, and skate over a course near the finish of which is a row of potatoes. These must be lifted in a spoon and the race finished without dropping them

Jim-Jam

The jam stood on the pantry shelf,
As jams so often do:
Till someone introduced himself
With: "Fancy finding you!"
Jam, Jam: Jam, Jam.

@

A chair stood by the pantry door,
As chairs have often stood:
One leg "not lost, but gone before,"
The others far from good.
Cheer, chair: chair, cheer!

@

The youth got on the wobbly chair,
As youths have often got:
To reach the jam that loved "up there"
He'd hatched a cunning plot.
Creak, crack:
crack, creak!

@

The chair, alas! unglued itself,
As chairs have done before:
The jam fell off the pantry shelf,
And Jim fell on the floor.
Fell, full: full, fell!

@

His mother hearing, laid her hand,
As fondest mothers will,
Upon the spot (you'll understand):
Poor Jimmy feels it still.
Smack, smack: smack, smack!
Slap, slope: slope, slap!

REGINALD RIGBY.

MR GUSTAWAY'S STRAW

The Story of a Fortunate Mistake.

By Gertie de S. Wentworth-James.

Young Mrs. Lessey sat up in the studio darning socks, while young Mr. Lessey painted a sea-scape—one of those serial pictures without any beginning or any end, which could be conveniently issued in instalments or by the yard.

After one hole had been filled up, and a setting sun introduced on the horizon, Mr. Lessey paused to sneeze six times.

"Oh! Jack, you've got a dreadful cold. Poor dear! That's through tramping about trying to sell 'Hermenlobia and the Driad' in the rain! I wish you had taken four aconite pilules as I wanted!" cried the artist's wife in accents of acute concern.

Her husband blew his nose, and looked sorry for himself.

"I believe I'm in for a touch of the 'flue,'" he replied, turning a cloud into a sea-gull. "Shan't go out to-day—shall stick up here and get this finished. Jove! my head aches!—wonder if old Sponger will buy it when it's done? Said he wanted something *peaceful*—this ought to suit, unless the sunset is too exciting!"

"Perhaps a moon would be better, darling? If so, *do* change it, because—because—oh! it'll be awful if this isn't sold! The b—butcher *is* getting so impatient!" And the break in Lynette's voice suggested that she was weary with battling against difficulties.

"I'm glad he's only getting (*a ishu! atishu!*) I should have thought it was a case of *got it*" replied Jack moodily, with a noisy punctuation of sneezes.

Lynette sighed and threaded her needle afresh.

Certainly it was terribly hard lines that, after being married less than two years and loving each other twice as much as they did before, these financial troubles should come along and spoil everything!

And it might have been *so* different if only Jack hadn't offended Aunt Jessica by accidentally drawing her likeness when illustrating a magazine story! He had never meant to represent the fictional "Mrs. Sniggs" (a typical mother-in-law with a taste for gramophones and beetle-powder) by a caricature of his rich influential relative, and it was only when the highly-glazed number came out that he realised the treachery of his pencil!

At first the Lesseys cherished desperate hopes that Miss Weir might not see that particular number of the *Regal Magazine*—but those hopes were soon destined to go the way of poor humanity's daydreams!

Aunt Jessica Weir *had* seen the illustrations to "Mrs. Sniggs on the Warpath," and when she sent round a copy of the periodical with a short note intimating that all connection between "The Grange," Northfields, and 10 Leaphill Road, Northfields, had ceased for ever, Jack and Lynette knew that they had fallen upon grey days.

And so it was. Miss Weir's rich friends ceased to have their portraits and miniatures painted; there was no big house open to entertain influential acquaintances; tradesmen, realising the ructions, grew chary about unlimited credit; presents of wine, game, fruit, cheques, and smart frocks for Lynette, became joys of the past, while the rumour soon gained ground (*and* reached 10 Leaphill Road) that Miss Weir had altered her will in favour of the Dismissed Chauffeurs Relief Fund!

This had all happened six months ago, and now Mr. and Mrs. Lessey were beginning to understand that art minus influence is a very different thing to art backed up by well-to-do connections!

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The gates of the big white house, with its carriage-drive, spacious stables, and *garage*, could be actually seen from the front windows of the Lessey's forty-pound-a-year villa residence and—oh! it was like Tantalus jumping up after the grapes to watch Aunt Jessica drive or whizz past with her chiffon sunshade held at a cruelly contemptuous angle!

"I wonder if SHE'll ever come round, Jack," murmured Lynette when the socks and the sea-scape had received another half-hour's attention.

The personal pronoun was quite sufficient indication—Aunt Jessica was always "SHE!"

"Not unless one of us could manage an almost fatal illness—nothing else would fetch her!"

"Oh! I don't suppose even *that* would bring her round!"

"I think it would. Aunt Jess is one of those essentially 'womanly' women who never feel really affectionate unless her friends and relatives are lying on beds of sickness. Now, if this confounded cold of mine turned from 'flue' to 'pneu,' and then the doctor said that all hopes——"

But Jack's sentence remained unfinished owing to the pressure of a small needle-pricked hand upon his lips.

"Don't, dear, don't even pr—pretend t—tot—t– talk abou——"

Then came a brief interval, during which bills, socks, pictures, and everything was forgotten—everything except themselves, each other, their beautiful, unending love, and their marriage, which was, of course, and undoubtedly, happier than any other marriage had ever been before!

When the interval for romance was over Lynette (now decorated on one cheek by an effective burnt sienna patch) resumed the conversation.

"If only you were like that *malade imaginaire* who lives in the Crescent (what's his name? You know, that man who moved in last quarter and thinks he suffers from nerves) it might be useful!" she said.

"You mean old Gustaway who stuffs wool in his ears after the manner of Ulysses, never allows the servant to speak higher than a whisper, and insists that the suet shall be chopped on an indiarubber pad, so as to deaden the sound. Yes, I've no doubt *he* could fake up an illness serious enough to bring the old lady round. But as, according to natural laws, it is probable that the Dismissed Chauffeurs will come into their inheritance long before *I* achieve any sufficiently alarming symptoms, the best thing we can do is to put Aunt Jessica out of our calculations, and—atishu! atishu! *atishu!*"

The last sneeze was a triumph of resonance, and it was not until its reverberations had ceased to shake the outbuilt studio walls that Lynette realised the presence of their "cook-housemaid-general" standing by the door.

"What is it, Maud? The milkman this time?" asked Mrs. Lessey dolefully.

Maud shook her head so violently that her cap (secured by a single bent hairpin) became loosed from its moorings.

"Well, what is it—who is it?" broke in the artist with masculine impatience.

"Please, m'm, it's—it's *Miss Weir from the Grange!*"

"Aunt Jessica! *Oh! Jack!*"

"Aunt Jessica! *Great Scott!*"

A moment's poignant pause, then—

"Wh—where is she, Maud?"

"I've showed 'er into the back parlour—I mean the drawing-room, m'm."

"Thank you, Maud—I—we—will be down in a minute."

When the handmaid had taken her departure, Jack spoke mumblingly, like a man who is afraid.

"Look here, you'll have to face her—I can't! I expect she's heard that I've sold the American rights of 'Mrs. Sniggs on the Warpath,' and has come to threaten us with President Roosevelt's intervention, or something! You must go, Lyn—I daren't!"

With one glance of magnificent scorn at her husband's perturbed face, (such a nice young face, full of school-boy sheepishness) Mrs. Lessey left the studio, braced up the stock of feminine courage which she always kept ready for emergency, hurried downstairs, and entered the back drawing-room.

Immediately on her entry a voluminous mountain of black taffeta and bugles rushed forward and clasped her in a motherly embrace.

"Oh! my poor dear, my poor dear!" sobbed Aunt Jessica. "What a trouble for you! Kiss me, darling, and let bygones be bygones. Thank Heaven I'm not a woman to harbour resentment towards the sick and afflicted! My poor Jack! To think of the chubby litule lad I used to nurse on my own knee—my only sister's boy—lying so racked with pain and suffering!"

(Jack "racked with pain and suffering," when he had only sneezed twenty-eight times, and his temperature was not more than two points above normal! What did it mean?)

Immediately on her entry, a . . . mountain of black taffeta and bugles . . . clasped her in a motherly embrace.

"But, dear Aunt Jessica," began Lynette, when the ever voluble Miss Weir interrupted her.

"Don't harrow yourself by giving me details, dearie!" she cried, once more clasping Mrs. Lessey in a taffeta-and-bugle embrace. "Directly I drove past I *knew*, and then all my resentment faded away. My poor child! Now I'm not going to stop now because I want to order fruit and wine and turtle soup to be sent *at once!* Oh! my dear, I have missed you. (By-the-bye, why don't you muffle the knocker as well?) I'm a cantankerous old woman! Forgive me!" And with another expansive kiss Aunt Jessica hurried out of the room and into the tiny dark hall, while in a condition of dazed astonishment Lynette opened the front door and then—well, then she partially understood!

The road, exactly opposite their house and extending all along to the side entrance, *was covered with straw*, laid down as in cases of serious illness.

This, then, explained Aunt Jessica's melting mood! She had seen this evidence of sickness, and had immediately buried all her resentment!

Haltingly, Lynette tried to commence an uncertain explanation, but, before she could achieve a connected sentence, Miss Weir had stepped into her motor and whizzed off in the direction of the shops.

"Jack, Jack, come here!" cried Lynette weakly, as she went back into the hall and closed the door.

Jack "came here," and then, using a great many more words than were necessary — according to the habit of emotional women—his wife explained what had happened.

"But who the—*atishu! atishu!*" he began, when Maud made a second sensational appearance.

"Please, m'm," she began, "Mr. Gustaway—you know, the gent what master calls a *blackguard-up-in-the-air*—him as lives in the Crescent, and always thinks he's took bad—'e've sent his compliments to say as he's so sorry the men made a mistake and put down the straw in front of our 'ouse instead of 'is, but there was a muddle between 10 Leaphill Crescent, and 10 Leaphill Road, and the straw people took it to the wrong place! 'E says it shall all be took up again, as 'e's very anxious to 'ave it 'imself to see if it'll do 'is nerves any good not to 'ear the sound of carts and things passing along."

When Maud had withdrawn, Mr. and Mrs. Lessey faced each other.

"Well, anyhow our *mistake imaginaire* has done us a good turn," began Jack, when a look in his wife's clear, blue eyes silenced him.

Of course, there is no reason to believe that Jack ever *did* contemplate allowing Aunt Jessica to remain under the delusion which had resulted in banishing her indignation; but even if such an idea could possibly have crossed his mind, Lynette's glance was enough to put him right with his conscience.

"You had better go round, dear, to Aunt Jessica and explain—*at once!*" said Mrs. Lessey quietly.

Jack did not reply except by taking down his soft felt hat from the dusty peg.

Then Lynette raised herself on tip-toe and kissed him.

"I expect she'll have you shown the door, now that you *aren't* ill, but it can't be helped. Good-bye, dearest," she murmured.

Jack stooped and kissed her, then he squared his shoulders and looked ostentatiously manly—till he turned in at the big white gates and became hidden from view!

Half-an-hour later there came a liveried messenger from the big house who brought a pencilled note addressed to Mrs. Lessey.

The note ran as follows:—

If you want your husband, you must come and fetch him as he is staying to tea. I want you both to meet Sir Jasper King, who will be in presently he is anxious to have his wife's portrait painted and doesn't mind price. You are two honourable, straightforward young things, and I'm a disagreeable, touchy old woman, who would never have seen the error of her ways except for the lucky accident of Mr. Gustaway's straw. I intend to make his acquaintance and give him a box of Hempseed Nerve Tabloids. Put on your prettiest hat and come round at once. (I've finished with the Chauffeur's Relief Fund for ever!)

Your loving,
AUNT JESSICA.

* * * * *

If, by gaining in affluence, Mr. Lessey has lost in art, it really doesn't matter. All their bills are paid, they live in a big house, their expectations are all right, and Jack has painted so many titled people that he is sure to be a R.A. before long.

He and his wife often make jokes about the "last *straw* that broke the camel's back," and concerning the "*straw* that shows which way the wind blows," or "making bricks without *straw*."

The witticisms are somewhat far-fetched, but the fact that outsiders can't share in them lends a certain flavour to these reminiscent jests.

Miss Jessica Weir's portrait in last year's Academy made her a wrinkle-less slender beauty of less than thirty-five—so different from those unfortunate illustrations to "Mrs. Sniggs on the Warpath!"

WINIFRED.

When in a gown of azure blue
I see you fair;
No other colour to that hue
I can compare.
Fawn, crimson, green, or palest straw
Rose pink or dove,
Each, worn by you, seems best. 'Tis so:
Dear face I love.

L. M. N. L.

Photo. Taylor.
Commissionaire Samuel Compton.

SURVIVORS' TALES OF GREAT EVENTS

XI.—KABUL TO KANDAHAR: THE TALE OF A LOST ARMY.

FROM THE NARRATIVE OF COMMISSIONAIRE SAMUEL COMPTON, LATE 9TH LANCERS.

BY WALTER WOOD.

This story of Field Marshal Lord Roberts' famous march from Kabul to Kandahar is told by a survivor who served for twenty-four years in the British Army, and took part in the march as a private of the 9th Queen's Royal Lancers. The march has appealed more strongly to the imagination of the public than some of Lord Roberts' greater achievements, because for nearly a month ten thousand fighting men were entirely lost sight of, and the gloomiest reports were circulated as to their fate. It was, indeed believed that the whole body had been annihilated by the Afghans; but, after an unexampled march of more than three hundred miles through barren mountains, the force reached Kandahar and relieved the garrison which was beleagured there. After leaving the army, Private Compton joined the Corps of Commissionaires, of which he is still a member.

IT was my birthday when we began the march from Kabul to Kandahar. That is one thing which fixes the start indelibly in my memory. There were 10,000 fighting men of us all told, and more than 8,000 followers—doolie-bearers, servants, and so on. Then we had 2,300 horses and gun-mules, and something like 8,000 camels, ponies, mules and donkeys for the transport. So that altogether we numbered 18,000 officers and men, and 11,000 animals.

By far the greater number of the forces consisted of native troops—7,000 odd to about 2,500 British. We had eighteen mountain guns, which are carried in sections and put together when wanted for use. You will understand how light we marched when I tell you that each British soldier was only allowed 30lb. for kit, and each native soldier 20lb. Everything had to be carried either by men or animals.

Our object was to make a swift and secret march from Kabul to Kandahar. And why? Because in Kandahar a little British garrison was beleagured by the Afghans, who were glutted with the butchery of Maiwand. You know the awful story of that disaster? Who does not?

General Burrows was commanding at Kandahar, and hearing that the enemy was advancing on Maiwand, only eleven miles away, he marched out to intercept him. That was on July 27th, 1880, when the Afghan War was in full swing. He was about half way to Maiwand when the Afghans fell upon him in overwhelming numbers. The fight began at twelve o'clock, and in three hours, out of 2,500 British troops nearly a thousand had been killed, to say nothing of the missing and wounded and the followers. The survivors struggled back to Kandahar, and were pinned in by an enemy that never showed mercy to any Englishman who fell into his hands. It was necessary to relieve Kandahar, and we were got together for the purpose.

We were called the Kabul-Kandahar Field Force, and every member of it was a picked man. We had a picked leader, too—Lord Roberts (Sir Frederick Roberts as he then was), and desperate as our business was there was not a soul amongst us who supposed there would be anything else at the end of it but victory. How could it be otherwise with a commander whose very name was worshipped and represented countless triumphs?

People talk glibly of a few thousand soldiers; but figures convey no meaning.

Think what a battalion of Guards means in London—how long it takes to march past a given spot. Only a thousand men, with everything in their favour, and no obstacles. What, then, of 18,000 human beings and 11,000 animals, crawling with its sick and

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footsore through a gloomy, barren land of mountains, intensely hot by day, and perishingly cold at night, ceaselessly harassed by a cruel foe that hung on to it to capture and destroy the stragglers?

If you could have commanded a view of it you would have seen it stretching for miles, just moving over crag and plain, its progress regulated, like a fleet of warships, by its slowest members.

You would have seen the kilted Highlanders, 60th Rifles, Sikhs, Native Pioneers, Ghoorkas, British and native cavalry, dooliebearers, transport people, and swarms of private and native servants all on the move, all apparently in confusion, but all controlled and kept in hand by the famous soldier, who seemed to be everywhere at all times. A peculiarity of "Bobs" was that he could snatch a few minutes' sleep at any time, and resume his work as fresh as a daisy. But unless you had such a bird's-eye view you never saw more than part of the column—even we of the cavalry rarely got beyond our own immediate companions.

And yet with all the apparent disorder there was cohesion and discipline. Lord Roberts had got his force together in wonderful fashion; he kept it in hand in wonderful fashion, he commanded it in wonderful fashion, too; and the most wonderful thing of all was that he got it through pretty much as a captain gets his ship from one port to another. No one, except those who took part in the march, can ever really understand what it meant—all you can do is to give an idea of it, and so far as I am concerned, a poor idea at best.

I have heard it said that when we left Kabul there were many who believed that we had bidden good-bye to the world. We were to journey by a route and through a region the very name of which was bound up with suffering and disaster to British troops.

You have already told, in the story of the Kabul massacre of '42, how only one man, Dr. Bryden, lived to tell the story of a lost army which had marched from Kabul. That catastrophe was still fresh in the minds of many people at home. Can it be wondered, then, that the gloomiest prophecies should be made as to the fate which would overtake us in the silent hills, and that when we had marched and communication with us had ceased, when day followed day, and yet no news was heard of us, the belief grew and became fixed that we should never more be seen?

That, they say, was the point of view at home; but we of the field force had other thoughts to fill our minds. Besides, whatever secret misgivings might have troubled us, was there not always the perfect, almost sublime confidence in our commander, and the conviction that, whatever might befall, he would see us safely through? Has not he himself put on record his faith in us, his soldiers, and told how thoroughly we understood and trusted each other?

It was the morning of August 8th, 1880, when we began to march to Kandahar. We of the cavalry brigade—the 9th Lancers and three native regiments—covered the movement at a distance of about five miles. That means, does it not, that while, say, the head of the column would be at Charing Cross, the leading cavalry would be at Greenwich? But, instead of smooth paved roads, there were plains and passes, the like of which you will not find anywhere in England.

Two of our cavalry regiments led the way, and another cavalry regiment was on either flank. Two infantry brigades followed, a mountain battery with them, and the field hospitals, the treasure—precious possession!—and baggage, and so on, came next. The rearguard was formed of the 3rd Infantry Brigade, with a mountain battery, and a troop or two of cavalry.

Hard as the work was which fell on the main body, it was, I think, more severe on the cavalry, because we had to take turns in going to the front and flanks and forming a screen round the main body which was marching in the middle.

There you have the rough details; but you must fill out the picture for yourself—the grumbling camels, the bucking mules, the stubborn donkeys, the wild little native ponies, and the patient, plodding horses, with the baggage, guns, forage, rations, ammunition—and the hundred and one odd things that are essential for an army in the wilderness.

We had bread-stuff for five days, preserved vegetables for fifteen, and rum, tea, salt, and sugar for thirty. Those were the supplies for the British troops. The natives were just as well provided for—indeed, so perfect was the foresight of our chief, that when at last we got to Kandahar, we had three days' supplies in hand.

From the time we began the march we were lost to the world, and the world for us seemed scarcely to exist. Our communications were cut, and the enemy took care that no news should come to us, and that no word from us should reach our friends. He cut the telegraph-wires, and did everything he

could to make us what we were for many days—a lost army.

It was a strangely lonely journey, although there were so many of us. What was happening in the district round Kabul, which we had left, and what was going on at Kandahar, whither we were bound? Would the garrison hold out until we came, or would the fierce enemy rush the city and destroy the defenders?

All sorts of possibilities occurred to us, and some of them were reasonable enough, because the entire effective garrison was only about a thousand British and three thousand native soldiers, with fifteen field guns. Add to their small numbers the intense depression due to Maiwand, and you can realise the doubts that sometimes filled and almost overwhelmed us.

We had got to sea, so to speak, and our business was to forge ahead and reach our destination. We soon settled down into the hard, stern graft of it, always looking ahead now, never behind, just as the sailor does who has his port to make. During the first four days we averaged eleven and a half miles a day. That was quick work, because the country was not difficult, and was rich enough to help us with our supplies. Less than a mile an hour seems slow indeed to us at home, but with crawling doolie-bearers and laggard followers it was a good rate of speed for an advancing army. And in such a country, too!

Our position was constantly menaced by three great dangers—attacks from the enemy, disease, and starvation. But here, again, the wisdom and foresight of our chief were evident. In a land where an enemy abounded, he kept him hovering at a distance; where supplies did not appear to exist, he managed to extract them; in a climate which brings the most appalling of illnesses, cholera, he succeeded in keeping us fit and well and in good spirits. The very sight of our commander was a tonic.

Every morning Lord Roberts could be seen galloping up towards the head of the column, accompanied by the four men of the 9th who formed his escort. How well we got to know that sight! There was the chief himself, illustrious throughout the Army and the world, mounted on his famous Arab charger Vonolel, which was his friend and companion for nearly twenty years. It was by special permission of Queen Victoria that afterwards Vonolel was decorated with the Kabul medal with four clasps, and the coveted star which was issued for the march itself.

And our chief did not hop half a mile round to escape a gutter. If he had done that there would scarcely have been an end to our labours in a land which seemed mostly made of gutters and gullies. He went straight up and ahead, and whatever came in his path he took it. That was his way—and he always got there.

When the commander of a force is marching through an enemy's country, as we were marching, he is entitled by the rules of war to do pretty much as he likes to keep his commissariat going, for on his eating and drinking his very life depends—and no man can fight for a bigger prize. We could have taken what we wanted at the point of the sword, and no one could have condemned us—according to the usages of war. What actually happened? Why, that our chief got all he could, which proved to be nearly all we wanted, by the simple, ordinary, unromantic method of paying for it.

Before the march was done he had purchased nearly five thousand sheep for food, and that was irrespective of the supply of sheep which we took with us at the start. Indian corn, too, growing in the fields, was bought when we could come across it, and welcome stuff it proved for our horses. Whatever we acquired was paid for—and that, I say again, was something to be proud of in the midst of the enemy's country. Nor were the women or the peaceful inhabitants that we came across molested.

I want to mention these points now, and specially to show you what a great commander can do in time of war. Mind you, the difficulties in the way of getting food were great, very great, but they were always overcome. Water and fuel were scarcest, and we had to strive hard to obtain either. Water we got by digging or scooping in the ground, and even then it was always salty, so that there was not much relief in taking it. As for fuel for cooking, it was so scarce that Lord Roberts actually bought houses for the sake of the wood in them, which was not much. The wood was taken out for the fires; but often enough we had to be content with little roots. These had to be dug up, and sorry work it was, too, at the end of a long day's march in the broiling sun.

When we were in the full swing of our task there was only one idea in our minds, and that was to push ahead. And push ahead we did. We literally did not, and could not, get any real sleep. When we halted, it was a case of taking off our jack

boots and rolling ourselves up in our cloaks or blankets on the ground.

By day we frizzled, and by night we froze. And with all the heat of the march there was the ever-present cloud of sand which the column raised—sand which got into our eyes, our mouths, our ears, our boots, our clothes—everywhere, until with the heat and irritation of it we were almost maddened. But torturing though it was, it was the same for all, and you can get used even to keeping your clothes on for the best part of a month.

When a man looks back on many of the things he has done he marvels that he has pulled through. So it is with this long forced march. There seemed to be no break between one day and another.

Before three o'clock in the morning the "rouse" sounded, infantry bugles and cavalry trumpets were crashing on the still air, everything became bustle and excitement, and in about an hour we were on the march again. Ten minutes' halt at each hour's end was made, with rather longer breaks for breakfast, dinner, and the day's last meal. Then, if you were on rear-guard duty, which was equivalent to shepherding the scattered flock and getting it safely into the fold, you had to keep up to your work until well into the evening. You would begin at three in the morning, say, and end at seven at night or later—fifteen or sixteen hours of incessant duty.

Work like that will tell on anybody. We saw its effects first and most clearly on some of the weary, footsore native followers. They began to lose heart, and when a man on active service does that the end is not far off, in some form or other. In their cases it took the shape of hopeless lagging behind.

Threats and pleadings were useless. A native would fall to the rear and hide himself. When found he would beg to be allowed to remain and die—although he knew that the Afghans were ceaselessly hovering round to cut the stragglers off. You may watch and threaten as hard as you please, but on such a journey, if a man is determined to elude watchfulness, he will succeed. Some did succeed, and the result was that they fell into the hands of the enemy and were cut to pieces.

Whenever a straggler was lost like that there was always nameless mutilation. You ask, Why? Well, the soldier's story is that once, in Kabul, there was an English Army surgeon who was so marvellously clever that he patched up seemingly hopeless cases. His skill was reckoned miraculous, and by way of circumventing doctors generally the Afghans never rested with mere death. They went to the extremity of cutting their victim to pieces, believing that then not even the cleverness of white doctors could patch him up and make him live again.

When we were really in the thick of it we were in it with a vengeance, I can assure you. Twice we had two "reveilles" in one day. Any soldier knows what that means, and those who are not soldiers will understand when I liken it to the case of a civilian who is roused, say, at three o'clock in the morning, goes on slaving without sleep, and, as a matter of routine, is roused again at the same time next day. In that case he gets two "reveilles" in the twenty-four hours, does he not? And two such routings out are quite enough for any man, even in the course of a long, forced, desperate march.

But there was no grumbling, no repining. How could there be, when we had such a glorious example set by our chief and our officers? We knew that whatever hardships we endured they also were undergoing them—and that means everything in keeping you at it and up to it.

We settled to the monotony and hardness of our task. Day followed day, each being pretty much like its predecessor.

There was the never-ending choking dust of an army on the march, the constant search for fuel and water, and the everlasting work of keeping the units together, as well as the ceaseless strain of being ready for an onslaught by the enemy.

And all the time we were climbing, scrambling, crawling on our way—now up a hillside, now down a mountain pathway, but always in a dreary, sunbaked, stifling country, which gave the eye no pleasure or relief, and did not allow the mind or body to rest.

Just under a hundred miles from Kabul we reached Ghazni, famous in British military history, and especially interesting to our field force, because our chief's father had taken part in its capture more than forty years before, and had got his C.B. for it. Ghazni was at that time one of the strongest fortresses in Asia. Early one morning, a British force blew in its gates, stormed the place, and after a fierce struggle planted its colours on the shattered ramparts.

Lord Roberts and his staff now entered the fortress and met the Governor; then we drove ahead again, plunging into a country which seemed more depressing and inhospitable than ever. We came to a spot where a

Our sick had grown rapidly in number, and the force had now trailing after it a long slow procession of doolies.

little British victory had been won. The natives had given it the fresh name of the "Resting-place of Martyrs." I have told you how the Afghans treated British stragglers. They were not more kind to our fallen troops who had had decent burial at this spot, for we saw that our soldiers' graves had been dug up and their bones cast out and scattered.

On again we went until we reached a place called Kelat-i-Ghilzai. Then we learnt that Khandahar was still holding out, and that a sortie had been made by the garrison. And a sorry sortie it proved to be, for General Brooke and no fewer than eight more British officers had been killed. But the garrison was safe—that was the main point, and seemed likely to hold the fort until we reached it.

Our force, already big enough and unwieldly enough, was increased by the addition of the garrison of Kelat-i-Ghilzai, which Lord Roberts decided to take with him. This addition brought up our total to just under twenty thousand men, of whom only 3,200 were Europeans.

We had now marched without anything more than absolutely needful halts for more than two hundred and twenty miles, and to the unspeakable joy of everybody Lord Roberts ordered a day's halt, so that man and beast might get a little rest.

While we rested we were able to make inquiries about our friends in other parts of the force and to learn what had happened to the column generally. Our friends were still alive and well, in spite of cholera scares and such like things, and if any were bad it was mostly their own fault, because in their fear of cholera they had nearly poisoned themselves with medicine, particularly chlorodyne.

Our sick had grown rapidly in number, and the force had now trailing after it a long slow procession of doolies. We did not then know how many men were unable to march and had to be carried, but we learnt afterwards that nearly a thousand had to go into hospital when we got to Kandahar. For them there was no withstanding the hardships of the march, the greatest of which arose from the intense heat of the sun. Lord Roberts himself succumbed to an attack of fever and had to be carried in a doolie, and it was only when we were reaching Kandahar that he was able to get into the saddle again.

We pushed ahead and still ahead, and when Kandahar was very near we redoubled our precautions so that we should not be trapped or taken unawares. When we saw the fortress at last it was very much like the people coming out of the wilderness and beholding the Promised Land. We had emerged from the unknown and got into touch with life again, and I don't know which felt the greatest exultation, the besieged or the relievers. On the last day of the month the principal British officers—General Burrows amongst them—came out from Kandahar to meet us, and Lord Roberts marched into the city with them.

The beleaguered troops—there were a thousand British and three thousand natives—hailed us joyfully as deliverers, and well they might, for they had quite lost heart, believing that the worst had happened to us, and that we should never get through to their relief. You cannot wonder at it, either, because there was always the gloom of Maiwand over everything, and the enemy, strong and fierce, ever watching for his chance to swoop down and take the fortress and destroy the defenders.

The coming of relief, that is to say, the appearance of our chief, electrified them. He was utterly worn out with his march and his illness, but his work was not yet finished. There was the enemy to get rid of, to sweep away, to crush out of existence before the march could fairly claim to be ended. There was communication, too, to re-establish with India, and so with home. Our wonderful commander did both—just as he seemed to do everything. He gave the Afghans battle the very day after we ended our march, and crowned his glorious work by routing them completely and with heavy loss.

At Maiwand the enemy had captured two British guns. They were immensely proud of their trophies, as they had good cause to be. When the fight was done and the dead lay thick about the plains of Kandahar, all his artillery was in our possession, and amongst them was the pair of British guns. They were the greatest trophies which Lord Roberts handed over to the Indian Government, and I daresay amongst the proudest that he ever got himself, for they were given back to him, and in turn presented to the Royal Hospital in Dublin—which is as it should be, because Lord Roberts is an Irishman.

That is the story of the army which was lost in the hills and was found again. But it was only lost to the world in imagination, because the world could not get into touch with it, nor could the force send messages. That it never really was lost I have tried to show.

Lost! How could it be, with such a pilot?

Mislaying His Grandmother.

The Story of a Forgetful Sailor.

By James Barr.

As Jack, genial giant, hastened along the streets of Hammersmith some three or four years ago, his trousers seemed to flap wild signals of distress at the unwarranted pace. But Jack's cheeks were aglow with delightful expectation. His three long years on the Mediterranean Station were shoved behind him; once again he was to be with his only care and greatest joy, his Grannie. Into the doorway of a small house he dived and had Grannie in his great arms. She, patient soul, quite blind and unable to hear any sound less in volume than a lusty shout, was not taken by surprise. Before he had hastened half way across the room she cried his name.

All that evening lusty bluejacket and faded Grannie sat in glorious silence, her two wizened hands, fragile as autumn leaves, in his great palm. Jack thought of nothing but the fine treat he had in store for her. Over and over again to himself he vowed the idea the one brilliant effort of his life. He went to bed happy because of the idea, he slept sound on it, at break of day he arose light-hearted owing to it, at breakfast he felt positively proud of it. When the humble meal was finished he set about putting the idea into execution. Bent on doing the thing well, Jack secured a "growler," and in high feather bore off Grannie to the Underground railway station.

For the treat his one flash of genius had revealed to him was no less a matter than a journey by train through the tunnels of the Underground, even as far as Whitechapel and back. Indeed, it was a brilliant idea.

Time, by filching sight from her eyes and hearing from her ears, had wofully limited Grannie's chances for enjoyment. Appeal to the eye or ear there could not be, and eye and ear are, in the poor, the two senses which lend themselves most to entertainment. To those who have led a life of activity there is joy in motion, and Jack reasoned that the very defects of the Underground would be, to Grannie, virtues. The shaking of the train, the jolting and jirring, the stopping and starting, the slamming of the doors, the rough, raucous bustle which she could feel, although she could neither hear nor see, would satisfy her that she was still an active atom of rumbling London. So he took two third-class returns to St. Mary's, Whitechapel, started down the stairs, and found himself on the "down" platform instead of the "up."

Jack grinned a genial grin when this was pointed out to him, and that Grannie should not suffer for his carelessness he picked her up in his arms and bounded up the stairs shouting a good-natured explanation in her ear as he went. Across the brain of every sailor there is a smear of superstition, and for a moment Jack felt uneasy over the head of this mistake.

He forgot all about it, however, when, like a glorified steam roller, the clumsy engine pitched and rattled into the station, trailing its length of frowsy carriages. Jack picked upon a vacant smoking compartment for Grannie, who loved the rare redolence of ship's tobacco, and seated her in the corner. The jolt and rattle of the cumbersome train was good to him, for he saw that Grannie smiled at finding himself abroad in the world.

In the midst of his satisfaction there suddenly struck upon his ear the cry: "All change!" A guard threw open the compartment door.

"Whitechapel already?" Jack asked. "Is this Whitechapel?"

"Whitechapel! This isn't a Whitechapel

train; this is 'Igh Street, Kensington. Change 'ere for Whitechapel."

"More trouble!" grinned Jack to the guard as he picked up Grannie and stepped to the platform. "This is the second blunder I've made this trip. I suppose it will be three times and out. It always is. However, I'm getting over with them early and then I can settle down to a happy day."

The porter took a friendly interest in the loose-jointed bluejacket and his calm-faced charge. He glanced at their tickets and Jack explained the object of the outing. Then the porter tendered knowing advice.

"If I was in your place I'd tuck myself into the circle train what's coming in now. It will take you by way of Baker Street and King's Cross to Aldgate, where you change for Whitechapel. You can manage it all right at Aldgate with these tickets if you 'as the old lady in your arms and say you are in a maze and don't know w'ere you are."

The porter winked a comprehensive wink.

"Right you are," sung out Jack as he made for the incoming train.

It was at King's Cross that a shipmate of Jack's espied him, and hailing him heartily, entered the compartment. Jack, grinning as ever, explained the object of his jaunt, and the brilliancy of the conception quite captivated the shipmate. Tobacco was exchanged, and the two fell to discussing bo'swains and bull-dogs, and what they were going to do in London and what they were not going to do. And when they bethought themselves and glanced out of the window, lo! they had passed Aldgate and had reached the Monument.

"Hang me if I seem able to fetch my moorings to-day, and me with Grannie aboard, too," said Jack, bringing his fist down upon his knee.

"Bother your moorings! What's the use of moorings when you're loose in London? Stick to the Circle and let Whitechapel go. Come on o' me. I'm for Victoria. You're not obliged to raise Whitechapel, are you? No. Well, stay aboard this train, and go round and round the Circle till she's 'ad enough, then set your course for 'Ammersmith and 'ome. If anyone kicks up a row tell 'im you are swinging to adjust compasses. That will be a new fairy tale on this line, I'm thinking. But, Jack, you're a forgetful beggar. You would forget the fore barbette if you were left in charge of it on Ailsa Crag, you would."

So Jack sat tight. What matter where they went so long as they kept in motion? Grannie sat in silent happiness.

As the train proceeded the two shipmates fell to discussing hammer and tongs a question which had agitated the lower decks of the battleship *Magnificent* while in the Mediterranean. They were in the very thick of it when the train rocked into Victoria Station. Jack's shipmate stepped out, but still held open the door to continue his argument. Breaking off abruptly, he said:—

"Let's 'ave a drink afore we part."

The next moment Jack was by his side, and the two swung off along the platform. As they talked, past them slid the train.

When the red light had become eclipsed in the smoke of the tunnel, Jack faltered in his stride, drew his hand across his forehead, and said:—

"I feel as if I forgot something in that train——"

His friend clutched him by his shoulders.

"Jack," he shouted, "w'ere's your Grannie?"

Jack's hands fell to his sides, his jaws dropped, and he stood there limp. His eyes, great and round, gazed into the black tunnel as though they looked into the mouth of the infernal regions.

"I've gone and forgot Grannie!" he gasped. "I've gone and forgot Grannie!"

Next instant he was off, bounding along the platform, and bawling at the top of his voice for the station-master.

"I've gone and forgot Grannie in that train!" he shouted to the astonished official. "I left her in the train while I went to 'ave a drink, and it's been and gone off with her."

"Did you expect the train to wait till you finished drinking?" began the station-master, but the look of consternation, pain, and shame that overspread Jack's face caused him to desist. "That's all right, my man. Don't you worry. Your grannie is quite safe. I'll send word ahead to have her get out at South Kensington and wait for you there, unless, as is likely, she gets out at Sloane Square of her own accord. You can take next train on and pick her up."

This, instead of pacifying the bluejacket, made him ten times more agitated.

"No, no," pleaded Jack. "Not for the world! Not for the world would I let her know that I had mislaid 'er and 'er in a train, and blind and deaf. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

Tears ran down the poor fellow's cheek as he told of Grannie's helplessness. Even

the station-master grew concerned for his sorrow.

"It's a Circle train the old lady is in, so you are all right. It will be round here again in an hour. You make yourself comfortable, have your drink at leisure, and she will come swinging round before you know what's up."

"An hour? Not me! Grannie alone for an hour, and 'er blind and as good as stone deaf! Not me! I'm off to catch 'er somewhere."

"If you take my advice you'll wait here," said the station-master, "but if you won't take my advice then cut across to the other platform and take the first Circle train that comes in. Stay in it till you come to King's Cross. Be sure you go no farther. You will find the officials give you all assistance."

"I've gone and forgot Grannie in that train," he shouted to the astonished official.

The shipmate, casting to the wind his own business to be with a friend in misfortune, dashed off after Jack across the bridge and bolted into the first Circle train that hove in sight. They begin to swing the Circle, neither speaking a word. An occasional tear trickled down Jack's cheek.

Outside Mark Lane station the train came to a stop and remained an unconscionable time, and again near Farringdon Street it was held up. Jack grew very impatient and threatened to climb out, but his friend would not have it, saying that somewhere in the heart of such a proceeding there must lurk a forty shilling fine. When at length the train crawled into King's Cross another train crawled out. Jack shot a searching glance into each third-class smoking compartment. Sure enough, there she was; Grannie sitting serene, composed, her face the picture of contentment and her wrinkled hands lying in her lap like peace epitomised. Jack blubbered silently, the sight of Grannie was so pathetic.

Word had come round from Victoria; consequently, Jack did not require to explain his position to the officials.

"If you can afford it, your best plan is to take cab to Blackfriars and head off the train there. You have ample time if you make haste."

Afford it! Jack would have given every penny he possessed in the world if, by so doing, he could reach the side of Grannie. At the top of the stairs Jack ran across an official who knew him not. Overlooking the fact that this might be so, Jack attempted to rush past the barrier without going through the formality of giving up his ticket. He was brought to with a turn.

"Let me pass, you idiot," he bawled. "I'm the fool that's lost his Grannie."

"No, you don't, not even though you'd 'a lost the rest of the family. Where's your ticket?"

Jack, in desperation shoved the two Hammersmith-Whitechapel tickets into the man's face.

"There you are; take 'em, and much good may they do you."

The stubborn collector of tickets was not to be bustled. A glance at the tickets showed them to be impossible at that station.

"These are no use 'ere," he said. "If you attempt to leave the station I'll——"

Jack did not wait to hear what dire disaster threatened. He darted down the stairs with the speed of a shooting star, while the collector, divining that the sailor's intentions were to escape, set up a hullabaloo of "Stop 'im!" "Stop 'im!" Jack ran into the arms of a friendly porter.

"Come along o' me before I murder that fat'ead at the top of the stairs. He won't let me pass, and I'll miss Grannie again."

"Let Jack pass out——" began the porter shouting up the stairs, but Jack would not have it.

"Come along and see me out," he said, seizing the man by the arm. "You know me, matey! Come along."

"Humph! 'e don't look it," grunted the ticket collecto. to the porter's "E's all right."

Into the first hansom he clapped eyes on Jack shoved his shipmate, and himself jumping up he hooked chin over the eaves and sung out:

"Blackfriars Underground! Be lively and don't lose no time neither."

Cabby threw up the little trap door in the roof of the hansom and gazed down upon the two.

"W'en you gets through with me keb per'aps you'll get out same way as you come in and oblige *me*."

"Oblige you be blowed!" yelled Jack. "You get a move on you before I sets about you, do you hear?"

"I 'ears all right. Don't you worry yourself about my 'earing. If you'll use your jaws less and your ears more you'll save yourself a heap o' trouble. Get out of me keb, I tells you."

"What! Do you mean to tell me that you won't drive me to Blackfriars?"

"No, I won't."

"Oh, you won't, won't you? We'll see whether you will or you won't. I say you will."

"And I says I won't."

"Sit 'ght!" said Jack to his friend, as he dashed for a policeman who stood, a pillar of blue, some yards away. Stately, without emotion or hurry, the officer approached and turned a calm but inquiring face to cabby. Cabby at once assumed the offensive.

"I asks you, constable, to make that bloomin' bluejacket w'ats in me keb to get out. 'E's settled down for a cruise, and 'e don't 'ave one in my keb. W'y? W'y, because I'm engaged and 'ere comes my fare. Now then, salt" this shouted through the little trap-door—"now then, salt, bundle out and make 'aste, or the officer will 'elp you."

"Why didn't you tell me that before?" roared Jack in his indignation; but the cabby, with not a suggestion of a smile, replied:

"W'y didn't you ask me?"

Fortunately there is more than one cab in London, and the two bluejackets were soon flitting along Gray's Inn Road. The hansom flashed across Holborn, sliced off St. Andrew's Street, and was making its way along St. Bride Street, when the inevitable accident happened. In trying to thread quickly through the traffic, cabby misjudged his distance, and in an instant over flew a barrow loaded with a hawker's supply of apples. The apples danced along the roadway like

"I've been longing to 'ug you, Grannie, these two hours, but—but people 'ave been watching me."

bubbles over rapids. The cab-horse, wise to London ways, came to an abrupt stop, and stood with its hoofs among the scattered fruit. The hawker, having by a wild leap escaped harm, mechanically picked up an apple and began vigorously to polish it with his tattered coat sleeve, in the meantime gazing up at cabby. Cabby ran his eye over the scene, and then put down the reins to await the inevitable. A newspaper cart whirled by to the sound of crunching fruit. A policeman stalked towards the trouble.

"Do you want all the bloomin' apples, or only them what you've used?" asked the hawker sarcastically.

Cabby looked at the man in amused scorn. Once more Jack hooked his chin over the eaves.

"What are you waiting for? Your cab isn't 'urt. Cut along!"

Cabby turned his scornful eyes on the sailor. But the hawker was none of your tongue-tied ones. He began with: "Oh, indeed!" and then he proceeded to knead a great slob of verbal mud which he flung straight at the bluejacket's face. At a bound Jack was on the pavement, but his shipmate had him round the waist before he could reach his man.

"Remember Grannie, Jack," intreated his shipmate. "Don't get into a row, or she'll 'ave to stay aboard that train till they pay off to-night."

Jack's frenzy disappeared.

"I'd give six months' service for one go at that blackguard," he sighed. "But poor Grannie——"

Ponderously the policeman took names and addresses, and a few minutes later Jack found himself on Blackfriars Station platform. Whether Grannie had passed through or not he could not guess, so he took the first train to Victoria to consult his friend the station master.

"She passed through here in the last Circle," said that official. "I took a good look at her and she was quite happy. She is all right for another round. I slipped one of my porters into the compartment to see that nothing goes amiss with her. You'll wait here this time? Good! By-the-way, you haven't had that drink yet."

Jack, as he wiped cold perspiration from his brow, thanked the kindly man.

To Jack that hour seemed as long as a year on the Mediterranean, and when at length the train rocked in the bluejacket found the compartment with a dash. He held a finger to his lips for silence as he opened the door, slipped in, and took a seat beside the sightless old woman. As the train moved out of the station Jack gathered Grannie's hands in one of his. Drawing her head to his shoulder he shouted in her ear:

"I've been longing to 'ug you, Grannie, these two hours, but—but people 'ave been watching me."

UNDER THE MISTLETOE.

I remember when I kissed her
Years ago.
'Neath the pretty green and yellow,
Mistletoe.
While without the stars were shining,
And the moon with silver lining
Shone on lake its shades combining
Far below.

And the pucker on her lips
Sure did show.
And the scarlet in her cheeks
Flamed aglow.
Yet the never-ending bliss
Of that first ecstatic kiss,
Was a rapture not to miss
'Neath mistletoe.

But now we're old and lone,
Bent and grey,
And our little birds have flown
Far away.
And we sit by fireside bright
And we watch the deepening night
As the ever flickering light
Fades away.

—WALTER SMYTH.

A Nigger Minstrel Entertainment.

Practical Hints for Amateur Coons.

By Sheila E. Braine.

Most girls and boys delight in "play-acting," and therefore, as the Christmas holidays loom in sight, the momentous question is broached in many a family: "What are we going to do this year?"

Then comes the difficult task of selecting a suitable play for a limited number of actors of different ages and varying ability. Often it is enough to drive one wild. The plays you like will not "fit" your company, and those more accommodating are either stupid or vulgar.

In the majority of cases what the grown-ups—who know that they will have to do most of the work—pine for is something amusing, that is neither too elaborate nor yet costly. In these respects a nigger minstrel entertainment is to be commended: it can be got up by the youngsters themselves—a qualification of the first water—and although elastic enough to take in everybody who mustn't on any account be left out, it affords great scope for individual talent.

In the matter or dress, anything of a gay and jaunty nature can be worn. The boys don high paper collars, brilliant ties and belts, white cotton gloves, and straw hats stuck on one side; while the girls put their hair up, and wear bright-coloured frocks and preposterous hats loaded with flowers and ribbons.

All must black their faces or use crêpe masks. Aunt Chloe should be plump, and have a bonnet with strings tied under the chin, and a white "front" made of cotton wool sewn on a strip of net.

The young minstrels are seated in a row, and at intervals rise from their chairs and promenade round them, or else round the room, doing a cake-walk step. There should be one or two banjoes, and a violin or 'cello, if possible; the bones, castanets, rattle, toy drum, flute, tambourine, triangle, concertina, the homely comb, and penny whistle can all be used with good effect. It is as well to have someone at the piano to keep things steady, and a violin or banjo solo, or a recitation, makes a pleasant variation.

Bones, of time-honoured memory, sits at one end of the merry row, and the next most talented minstrel at the other; Aunt Chloe takes up a solid position in the middle.

With regard to the songs, a great deal naturally depends upon the amount of musical

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talent available, also whether the entertainment is to be a semi-public one, or strictly reserved for the home circle, in which case, family favourites, no matter what their age, can be pressed into service.

Any good nigger and coon songs would be suitable, also songs out of comic operas, rounds, catches, and nursery rhymes. A list of the ditties should be made out, for Bones, the leader of the troupe to refer to; and the singers should remember the importance of learning the words perfectly, both of the songs and patter dialogues.

The latter, here given, may perhaps serve as models for others, to be composed by the players themselves, bringing in topical allusions, and the good old family jokes which are always regarded so indulgently at Christmas time. It is hardly necessary to add that the girls' parts can very well be taken by boys.

If the party contain an artist, he may like to make himself responsible for an original and ornamental programme, giving the theatrical names of the performers; such as, for example: Mr. Hayseed, Mr. Skylark, Dan'l Julius Cæsar Tompkins, Uncle Toby, Corncockle, Pompey, Dinah Sunflower, Pumpinella, Bedelia, Fancy Woodbine, Lulu, Bluminia, Mrs. Almira Sweetbriar, Dahlia Flowerstalk, Clementina, Poppy Sandalwood, &c.

CONUNDRUMS.

BONES.
UNCLE GEORGE WASHINGTON.
MISS PROSERPINA PEASBLOSSOM.
AUNT CHLOE.

BONES. The other day as ever was, Miss Peasblossom, we was speakin' of Mary and her little lamb. Now, I should like to prosecute the followin' interesting question: "*Why* did Mary have a little lamb?"

MISS PEAS. (*giggling*). Oh, go 'long, Mr. Bones, do! I couldn't reely guess a riddle, no, not for a banjo in a golden case 'll studded with diamonds and turquisses.

BONES. Then I'll ask *you*, Aunt Chloe: "Why did Mary have a little lamb?"

AUNT CH. Lawes, chile, I dunno, 'less it was 'cause it hadn't growed into a sheep.

BONES. Uncle George Washington, you are a man of intelligence; what do *you* say?

UNCLE G. W. That's true, sah. Dis nigger's a man of berry subtle 'telligence. I guess I can put an answer to that ar conundrum of yours, Mr. Bones. Mary had a little lamb, 'cause the beef was underdone.

ALL. Ha, ha, ha! Capital.

BONES. Bravo, Uncle George. Nothing of the Washington Post 'bout you, sah? Guess you'll nebber stand still when all the rest are running away. You'll run fust, you're that quick. But now I'll prepositate another conundrum.

Uncle George Washington.

AUNT CH. You're a rare ticklesome man Mr. Bones.

BONES. Yes, but fust, you all sort of know, I 'spose, what a leopard is?

UNCLE G. W. 'Tis a creepy, creepy creature as creeps and crawls up behind you in de gloamin', when you're settin' in the melon-patch, and goes *pounce!*

MISS PEAS. (*screams*). Oh, Uncle George, how could you! You've made my heart go tic-tic-toloreux fifty to the minute.

AUNT CH. (*reproachfully*). You silly old muff'n, you! If you want to scare the ladies, Mr. Washington, you'd better go outside the door, an' my ole man 'ull talk Japanese to you wid de frying-pan.

UNCLE G. W. (*dolefully*). Dat's jes my luck. If ever I tries to make myself 'greeable to the ladies, there's sartin to be trouble. I'd go an' be a hermit in a well for tuppence.

BONES. Come, come, there mustn't be all this discuitin' 'mong friends. Cheer up, Uncle George, you'll soon be dead. He didn't mean nothing, Aunt Chloe, an' he won't get doing it again. Now, I'll preposterate my conundrum once more. Can a leopard change his spots?

AUNT CH. (*promptly*). No, sah, I should say not. Dey am Nature's spots, an' Nature's spots won't wash clothes—I mean dey won't wash out. Dey is fixed in tight like my ole man's wool.

BONES. Miss Peasblossom, glad to see your rosy lips a-smilin' again. May I ask what you say 'bout my conundrum?

MISS PEAS. (*coyly*). Why, Mr. Bones, I can't 'spress any opinion 'bout leopards. Dey don't come my way, sah.

AUNT CH. Laws, honey, tank de mussy an' de grace dey don't, or you'd never be a-sportin' of dat ar fancy parasol o' your's again. Leopards is awful ticklesome beasts.

BONES. Well, I shall have to come to you once more, Uncle George Washington. Turn the limelight of your powerful 'telligence on it, sah, an' tell me—can a leopard change his spots?

UNCLE G. W. (*firmly*). Well, sah, since you inquisitate me, I say no, he can't. Not when they've growed up with him, and got to be part of his decimal system.

BONES. Then let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, you're all wrong. When a leopard's tired of one spot he can go to another. See?

ALL. Ha, ha, ha! Very good!

MISS PEAS. Oh, Mr. Bones, you *are* a ticklesome man! Don't it hurt you now and then being so 'strordinarily comic?

BONES. No, Miss Peasblossom, not when it's a spontaneous combustion. You see, spontaneous combustions come nat'ral to a man of genius.

UNCLE G. W. Wal, tank goodness, dere ain't any of 'em here. My ole Uncle Cuffy, as died of a post-mortem last year, he was what we call a man of genius. Used to put hisself to bed in de umbrella-stand an' sing, "Hold de fort for I am coming," till you could hear him down at de parish pump. He was a lively ole lizard was ole uncle Cuffy! An' clever wasn't de word for him! Why, he knew all de stars an' called 'em all names; just awful names he called 'em sometimes.

"Bones," of time-honoured memory.

AUNT CH. Dat umbrella-stand 'mind me powerful of young Jake Corncockle that had a squint in his eye. He was a man of genius, too, he was. One night dere was a fire in de house, an' he had to carry his ole mammy down three flights of stairs. Says she, "Jake, throw de feather bed out of winder," says she, "afore you takes me." An' Jake, being a man of genius, he done jus' got muddled in his brain-pan. An' he took an' throwed his ole mammy out of de winder, an' rushed down with de feather bed. Laws, chillen, I'd as soon have a roaring zebra in de house as a man ob genius. Dey is jus' *awful!*

BONES. 'Pears to me you don't none of you know what you're talkin' 'bout. Why, 'tis the man of genius as makes the beautiful poetry, an' jography maps, an' sausages, an' motor-cars, an' p'lice-stations, an' gramaphones, an' all dem necessary articles. An' de country is that grateful it don't do nothink for him long as he's alive. But soon as he's dead, an' only wants a halo an' a trumpet—sakes, it puts up a great big thumping moniment to him, and says, "Willy, we have missed you; you was a man ob genius, Willy!"

UNCLE G. W. That's kind o' true. I 'member when my ole uncle Cuffy took his ticket for de 'spress train to Heaven, he——

BONES (*interrupting*). Ladies an' gentlemen, 'pears to me it's time we had a little music. With my kind permission, we will now sing, &c.

PLURALS.

BONES. MR. TITMOUSE.

BONES. I s'pose now, Mr. Titmouse, you're well up in the English grammar?

MR. T. Well, yes, sah; I took de ungrammatical course at school. I didn't get de prize, 'cause there was 'leven others in front of me. We was twelve in class.

BONES. I should like to ask you a grammatical question, Mr. Titmouse. What is the plural of sarcophagus?

MR. T. Sarcoffee—how much?

BONES. Sarcophagus, Mr. Titmouse, the plural of sarcophagus. You look rather rattled, sah!

MR. T. (*rubbing his chin reflective'y*). Oh, not at all, Mr. Bones. Spell dat ar word with a capital S, do you?

BONES. It doesn't matter whether it's spelt with a big S or a little S. I simply ask you to tell me the plural.

MR. T. (*musingly*). De plural of sarcoffeegustus.

BONES. It seems to me, Mr. Titmouse, you don't know what a sarcophagus *is*.

MR. T. Bet I do, Mr. Bones. Laws, my ole Aunt Lizzy, she got piles of 'em in her back kitchen. Keeps 'em to pizen de flies with.

BONES. I perceive, sah, you're quite igno ignorance, rant of de 'tricacies of Egyptian history. So I will give you a hint. Dey had cur'ous ways in de land ob Egypt where de plague was. When a king or a big railway contractor died, dey took an' dry-pickled him, an' put them in a sar——

MR. T. (*hastily*). Don't say another word, Mr. Bones; I'm all right there. I've got it on de nail. De plural of sarcoffeegustus am——

BONES. Well, Mr. Titmouse?

MR. T. (*triumphantly*). Coffins, sah!

Mr. Titmouse.

Miss Proserpina Peaceblossom.

Jake Corncockle.

ALL. Ha, ha, ha!

(*General noise of instruments.*)

MR. T. Well, now, Mr. Bones, you're an awful clebber gentleman, I should berry much like to ask you an ungrammatical question, too.

BONES. Go on, Mr. Titmouse, go on; don't be nervous, sah.

MR. T. I s'pose you're well acquainted with flowers, Mr. Bones?

BONES. Well, yes, sah, I think so. I know a sunflower when I see one.

MR. T. An' a cat-rose?

BONES. There is *not* such a flower, Mr. Titmouse.

MR. T. Well, sah, we've got a dog-rose, an' why not a cat-rose? Miaow! Howsumever, dat is not what I was going to say 'fore you interrupted me. You know dat sweet little blue flower dat grows down by de river, and puts its little feet in de water?

BONES. You mean the forget-me-not.

MR. T. Yes, sah; now what's the plural of dat leetle blue flower with its feet in de water?

BONES. That's a mighty easy question. Why, the plural of forget-me-not is nat'rally forget-me-nots.

MR. T. I'se surprised at your ignorance, Mr. Bones. Dat is not de grammatical answer at all.

BONES. Then, pray, what is it?

MR. T. Why, sah, 'cording to de laws of grammar, the plural of me is "us."

BONES. Yes, sah; I knew that.

MR. T. Well, den, de plural of forget-me-not is forget-us-not, Mr. Bones. He, he, he!

BONES (*in a tone of disgust*). You go home, you silly old toasting fork, an' ask your mammy to sew you up in a sack.

A HOUSE TO LET.

SAMBO. DINAH.

SAMBO. So you ain't found a house to suit you yet, Miss Dinah?

DINAH. No, Sambo, all de houses I been perspectin' are too pomptious for me. Too much rent an' taxes.

SAMBO. I sort o' thought, Miss Dinah, you was thinkin' of circumlocutin' dat leetle cottage 'long by the canal.

DINAH. No, sah. Mas'r Jenkins he behaved like a reg'lar old ptarmigan 'bout that thar cottage; we couldn't agree no how.

SAMBO. Well, a fust-class scrub-lady like you, Miss Dinah, ought to hab a nice, neat place to sit down in and do her knittin'. (*Reflectively.*) 'Come to think of it, I *did* see a leetle place de other day as was airtight an' well built, and hadn't nobody inside it.

A "Song and Cakewalk" by two coloured gentleman.

DINAH (*eagerly*). Why didn't you say so previous, Sambo? Where'bouts was it?

SAMBO. 'Twas down Sticklebat Lane, 'long the side of the road. But 'twouldn't hardly 'commodate you, Miss Dinah, I'm thinking.

DINAH. Laws, why not? I could squeeze in a bit, I s'pose. How many rooms was thar?

SAMBO. Only one, and one front-back-and-side door. It was a twirly kind of house, but it hadn't no spinal staircase.

DINAH. Who wants a spinal staircase! 'Tis the winders and chimbley you care 'bout. What was they?

SAMBO (*decisively*). They wasn't nowheres at all, so far as I could see.

DINAH. No winders, no chimbley? Go along, you nigger; you're just making fun of Dinah. Who'd pay rent an' taxes for a house like dat?

SAMBO. The last lady-lodger she didn't pay none.

DINAH. For mussy's sake, den, who was she?

SAMBO (*grinning*). Well, Miss Dinah, the last lady-lodger in dat neat little 'stablishment I'm tellin' you 'bout was just a snail. He, he, he!

DINAH (*wrathfully*). An' you've been taking up my valuable time talkin' 'bout a silly snailshell! Tell you what, Sambo, 'twould have been a good thing if yore mammy had 'tended more to yore manners with the broomstick when you was a piccaninny.

SAMBO. Laws, Miss Dinah, you'se real funny, you is. Ha, ha, ha!

BONES. You be quiet, Sambo. And now Miss Dinah, if 'greeable to you, we'll soothe your ruffled feeling with a song, ma'am.

THE LOST NOSE.

BONES.
MR. JUGGINS.
UNCLE REMUS.

BONES. Mr. Juggins!

MR. J. Sah?

BONES. I notice, Mr. Juggins, dat you have a bruise on your left cheek. May I inquire, did you get dat fighting for your king an' country?

MR. J. (*emphatically*). No, sah, I did not.

BONES. Then how, Mr. Juggins?

MR. J. That bruise, Mr. Bones, is where my wife tried to coax me. One day I wouldn't give her a new three-an'-sixpenny bonnet, an' she set to a-coaxing me with de coal-hammer. 'Twas berry powerful kind o' coaxing, I assure you; it sort o' sent me flyin' to dat yar bonnet shop like de bogies was after me.

BONES. I can quite believe it, Mr. Juggins. Uncle Remus, 'pears to me you're smilin', sah. Won't you tell de company what's a-going on in dat powerful mind ob yours?

UNCLE R. Why, Mr. Bones, can't a coloured gentleman exercise his risible muscles widout bein' asked to gib de reason? Dis am a free country, Mr. Bones.

BONES. Ob course, ob course, Uncle Remus. No offence meant, sah, whatsumever.

We should like to smile with you, that's all.

UNCLE R. (*mollified*). Oh, dat's all right, Mr. Bones, an' I don't mind 'xplaining to de company dat I was kind o' circumspecting in my mind 'bout my young days.

BONES. Ah, you were a rare young spark then, Uncle Remus. *We* know.

ALL. Oh, yes, *we* know!

UNCLE R. He, he! Well, ladies an' gentlemen, I was awful fiery, sure, when I was a young nigger. You couldn't hold me in, I was dat bubblin' over with mil'tary ardour. An' once I fought a jewel.

ALL. *No*, Uncle Remus, how could you?

BONES. Dat was bery brave ob you, sah, an' what happened on dat mem'rable occasion? Was you killed or only mortally wounded?

UNCLE R. 'Twas a great mussy, sah, but I wasn't wounded at all. We fought this yar jewel with swords, great, big, long swords. An' we went this way, an' that way, dish—dash—long-tail-fly (*swinging his arms*).

MR. J. Take care, Uncle Remus, you nearly put my glass eye out. Use more perspection, if you please, sah.

UNCLE R. Beg pardon, Mr. Juggins. Well, as I was saying 'fore I was interrupted, I had a sword, an' he had a sword. An' we went it, high cut, low cut, round cut, square cut, this way, an' that way, an'——

MR. J. (*crossly*). You'll have my nose off in a minute, sah, if you go on dat way.

UNCLE R. (*triumphantly*). No, but I had *his* nose off; de other jewellist, I mean. Jes' nipped it off like cutting radishes.

BONES. That was mighty clebber ob you, Uncle Remus. So you were victorious.

UNCLE R. Yes, sah, I was victorious, an' happy an' glorious. An' we looked all about de place for dat ar nose I cut off, for to fix it on again. De pore man, he cry quite pitiful: "My nose, a kingdom for my nose!"

BONES. And you couldn't find it? That was indeed strange.

UNCLE R. It was most un'countable where dat ar nose had jumped to. We looked an' we looked, an' dar was no nose to be found nowhere.

MR. J. So what did you do, sah?

UNCLE R. Why, sah, we strewed the ground with snuff—lots of good powerful snuff. An' we listened, an' presently dere come a leetle sneeze from a far corner, like it might be an angel's sigh. De nose was there, sure 'nuff; 'twas a Roman nose, turned up at de end—an' we stuck it on with seccatine, and dere it is to this day, a-growin' and a-blowin' like de flowers in May.

BONES. Dat's a very interestin' an' 'structive story of yours, Uncle Remus, and no doubt puffectly true?

UNCLE R. Oh, yes, sah, all my stories am puffectly true.

MR. J. Laws! you do surprise me, sah.

BONES. We're much obliged, Uncle Remus, an' now, if you're 'greeable, we'll oblige the company with a song.

A HARMLESS PROCEEDING

"He took her face, and kissed the tears
away!"
Would in a novelette fill up some
space;
But in this instance one can simply say:
He took her face.

"Why did he this?" you ask; "and in what
place
Do such revolting customs rule to-day?
Belonged he, then, to some flesh-eating
race?" . .

No need to think, in sorrowful dismay,
His action cruel or his conduct base:
*'Twas with his guinea Kodak—new that day—
He took her face*

CAP AND BELLS

THE SADDEST THOUGHTS.

"Even at Christmas, when all the world is gay and glad," said the grey-bearded philosopher, "there are wont to come to a man sad and solemn thoughts."

"Yes," agreed the young man who had no watch on the end of his chain; "and the saddest and most solemn are those that come to a fellow when he reads of the marriage of a girl to whom last Christmas he gave a diamond ring on which he is still paying instalments."

* * * * *

TOO TANTALISING.

MRS. SCRIBBLER (impressively): "Whatever you do, never, never marry a newspaper man."

SCHOOL CHUM: "Why?"

MRS. SCRIBBLER: "I married one, and I know. Every night my husband brings home a big bundle of newspapers from all over the country, and they drive me crazy."

SCHOOL CHUM: "The newspapers?"

MRS. SCRIBBLER: "Indeed they do. They are just crammed with the most astonishing bargains in shops a hundred miles away."

* * *

HAD HER REVENGE.

MRS. A.: "That woman next door went and got a hat exactly like mine."

MRS. B.: "Did you make a fuss about it?"

MRS. A.: "No. I gave mine to the cook."

A NICE SURPRISE.

JENKINS: "My wife surprised me to-day by telling me she wanted a little money to buy Christmas presents."

TOMKINS: "Why should that surprise you?"

JENKINS: "Because usually she tells me she wants a great deal."

* * * * *

A REAL MAN THIS TIME.

DAUGHTER (delightedly): "And did you really consent!"

FATHER: "Consent? My stars! I had to. The man demanded your hand like a highwayman holding up a coach. Consent? My good gracious! I believe, from the way he looked and acted, he would have knocked me down if I hadn't."

DAUGHTER: "Oh, it can't be! You must have been dreaming. Why, when he proposed to me he trembled so that he could hardly speak, and he looked so weak and nervous I had to hurry up and say 'Yes' to keep him from fainting."

* * * * *

SOMEBODY'S JOKE.

Calling on a maid one evening
In the season of good cheer,
William saw green decoration
Hanging on the chandelier.

William was a bit near-sighted,
But you couldn't call him slow;
And he thought he knew his business
When he sighted mistletoe.

Then he up and kissed the maiden,
Kissed her for an hour or two;
But she merely smiled demurely,
As shy maidens often do.

"Tell me why you smile?" he asked her,
When they parted in the hall.
"Really, can't you guess?" she giggled—
"That's not mistletoe at all."

A new method of proposing by aid of moustache and fringe.

Widow I.: "What was the cause of your husband's death?"

Widow II.: "Shortness of breath, I believe."

Widow I.: "Ah, dearie me! my husband got his to the last moment."

SOMETHING WORTH HAVING.

MRS. NEWRICH: "But Henry, how could you have given £10 for this dog? Is he really worth it?"

"MR. NEWRICH (with deep feeling): "Worth it? Ah, Emily, if you or I had the pedigree that dog has!"

• •

HOW IT HAPPENED.

She wore her heart upon her sleeve,
And that is how, we understand,
She happens to display to-day
A gorgeous diamond on her hand.

•

NO NEED TO CRY.

MOTHER: 'Goodness! How did you hurt your fingers?"

LITTLE SON: "With a hammer."

MOTHER: "When?"

LITTLE SON: "A good while ago."

MOTHER: "I didn't hear you cry."

LITTLE SON. "No, Mother, I thought you was out."

THE SAME EFFECT.

"It is very odd," remarked Mr. Hubbub, "that in Africa there is a tribe which cannot wear clothes at all. Clothes make them ill. Isn't it strange dear?"

"Not at all," replied Mrs. Hubbub. "The same thing happens in this country also."

"Oh, surely not. I never heard of such a thing in civilised countries."

"Well, William, I can tell you that even in this great and glorious land, the same phenomenon is by no means unknown. When I see Mrs. Highflier coming out every month or so with a brand new rig-out from head to foot, her clothes make me ill—make me ill, I say, William—I reflect that you are just as able to buy me new clothes as Mr. Highflier is to buy them for his wife, and don't." And Mrs. Hubbub dissolved in tears.

Mr. Punch: "My word! I'd like to see the cyclist that would run over me!!"

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THE LANGUAGE OF WEDDING CAKES.

"I'm going to get married," he said, as he placed a hand as large as a Dutch cheese upon the counter, "and I want a wedding-cake."

"It is customary nowadays," said the pretty confectioner's assistant, "to have the materials of the cake harmonise with the calling of the bridegroom. For a farmer, we have an oat cake; for a man who has no calling and lives upon his friends, the sponge-cake; for a newspaper paragrapher, spice cake, and so on. What is your calling, please?"

"I'm a pugilist."

"Then you'll want a pound cake," replied the young lady.

• •

SPECIAL ATTRACTION.

LADY: "I want to put in this advertisement for a servant girl. It will go in three lines, won't it?"

CLERK (after a rapid computation): "No, madam. It's three lines and three words over. We'll have to charge you for four lines; but you can put in four more words if you wish."

LADY (suddenly inspired): "Ah, just the very thing. Say 'police-station opposite corner.'"

AFTER THE QUARREL; OR, A SMART ANSWER TURNETH AWAY WRATH.

"Jenkins, show this gentleman the door!"
"Thanks, Dolly, I've seen it!"

NO NEED TO BOTHER.

Miss Hockheimer: "No, Mr. Pinkenbergh, I am sorry, but I cannot marry you. I could never love a man with red hair."

Mr. Pinkenbergh: "Dot vas notting. My barber tells me dot at der rate my hair is falling oudt I vill be completely bald in one year."

* * * * *

THE LETTER OF THE LAW.

Visitor: "I cannot catch even a glimpse of the sea, yet your advertisement says, 'Drawing-room with fine view of the sea.'"

Mrs. Grabbum: "And isn't that a fine view hung over the piano? Let me tell you the frame alone cost fifteen shillings."

* * *

TAKING TIME BY THE FORELOCK.

Ethel: "Mamma, don't you think women should know how to cook, so that they may be able to look after their husbands' digestion when they marry?"

Mamma: "Certainly, dear."

Ethel: "Mayn't I go to the kitchen, then, and practise making butter scotch?"

* * *

THE RETURNING PRESENT.

Some years ago a Christmas gift
Was sent me; but, alas!
It was a thing no use to me,
And so it came to pass.
On thrifty thoughts intent, I laid
It carefully away,
And sent it to a bosom friend
Of mine next Christmas Day.

Since then, as surely as the snows
In fleecy beauty fall,
And mistletoe and holly wreaths
Are hung upon the wall,
By parcels post or messenger,
Each second year, alack!
When Christmas gifts are going round
I get that present back.

HE LOOKED IT, TOO.

Bail of String: "Hallo, old chap! Feeling tired?" Parcel: "Yes. I feel very done up."

NOT WHAT IT SOUNDED.

"Hawkins," said Mr. Barlow to his foreman, "the firm has decided to inaugurate a system of profit-sharing with its *employés*."

"Good," replied Hawkins. "What were the firm's profits last year?"

"Last year the firm lost seven thousand pounds. That necessitates a cut of ten per cent. in wages under the new system. Tell the men the new arrangement comes into effect immediately, Hawkins."

* * * * *

TO FRIGHTEN IT AWAY.

"Ah, yes!" sighed the artist, "I am compelled to paint to keep the wolf from the door."

"Oh!" exclaimed the critic, "then you are going to hang the picture outside, are you?"

* * *

STRATEGY.

Fullcash (waking with a start in the middle of the night and hearing sounds in his bedroom): "Who's there? Speak! Who's there?"

Hoarse Whisper from the Darkness: "For goodness' sake hush! There's a burglar just gone downstairs; I'm a policeman, and, if you'll keep quiet and not strike a light, I'll nab him in two twos."

Fullcash obeys; and the whisperer, whose name is Sikes, ambles gently downstairs and out of the back door with his booty.

* * * * *

AVERTING TROUBLE.

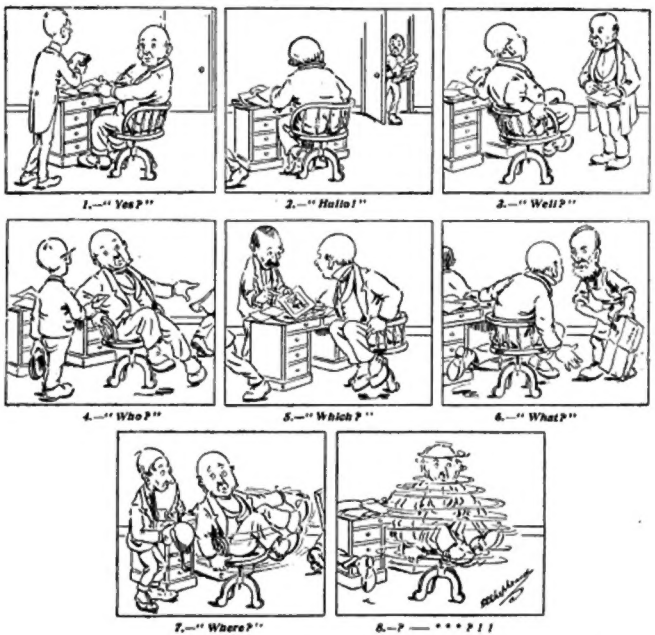
Maid (breathlessly): "Oh, miss, both the gents you're engaged to has called, and they're in the parlour, and somehow or other they've found it out; and oh, miss, I'm afraid there'll be trouble!"

Miss Flirtie: "Horrors! Oh, dear! What shall I do?"

Maid (after reflecting): "I'll manage it all right. I'll run and tell 'em you're crying y'r eyes out 'cause y'r father has lost all his money."

The Lion: "Looks as if I am having a four-course dinner prepared for me."

WHAT OUR EDITOR HAS TO PUT UP WITH.



1.—"Yes?" 2.—"Hallo!" 3.—"Well?"

4.—"Who?" 5.—"Which?" 6.—"What?"

7.—"Where?" 8.—? — * * * ? ! !

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NO HARM DONE.

CHAPPIE: "I'd just like to know what you mean by being engaged to both Cholly and me at once?"

MISS PINKIE: "Why, bless you, there is no harm done; you can't either of you afford to marry me, you know."

* * * * *

NO ALTERATION NECESSARY.

LODGER (quarrelling with his landlady): "I haven't been in lodgings for years for nothing."

LANDLADY: "I suppose not, and you're not going to stay here for nothing, either."

* * * * *

CLERKS MUST HAVE HAIR.

CLOSE MERCHANT: "Yes, sir, I want a new book-keeper; but you won't do."

APPLICANT: "May I ask why?"

CLOSE MERCHANT: "You are as bald as a billiard ball, sir. A man with no hair to wipe his pen on will rust out a whole box every week."

EXPENSIVE CHILDREN

MRS. GROWLER: "Now, grocer, you have charged me for things I never had. What do you mean by such items as one handful of raisins, one pocketful of almonds, two mouthfuls of brown sugar?"

GROCER: "It means, Mrs. Growler, that ladies who bring their children with them when they do their marketing must pay for all they get."

* * * * *

LACK OF EDUCATION.

FRIEND: "I wonder, Lena, that you allowed that Frenchman to kiss you in the conservatory."

LENA: "I couldn't help it."

FRIEND: "Why couldn't you?"

LENA: "Because I can't speak French."

* * * * *

CASH PREFERRED.

THEODORE THESPIS: "But, my dear fellow, I'll pay you in time."

PETER FLINT: "I prefer it in money."

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ACCOUNTED FOR.

STODGER: "It seems to me that this egg has a fishy flavour."

KWIBBLES: "Perhaps that's because you are eating it out of the shell."

* * * *

The melancholy days have come,
And with them comes the thought unpleasant,
That we must soon commence to save,
To buy dear Jane a Christmas present.

* * * *

CIRCUMSTANCES PREVENTED IT.

"My father says circumstances will prevent us from getting married."

"What circumstances?"

"Yours."

Dudely was at the theatre, where he pulled to pieces the play in audible tones.

During one of the intervals the man occupying the next seat rose, and handing Dudely his card, walked out.

It was the author!

Poor Dudely!

UNDER THE AUTOMOBILE

TOMKINS: "Young Showfur is always gazing up at the ceiling."

JENKINS: "Yes, it's a habit he's got into since he bought a second-hand motor-car that breaks down and wants tinkering every two miles or so."

* * * *

A PROFESSIONAL REASON.

"Will you have anything?"

"I'd rather not."

"How's that?"

"Well, you see," explained the popular composer, "I've got to write a drinking song for my new opera, and I must keep my head perfectly clear until I have finished it."

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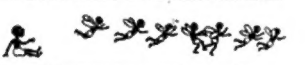
TEN LITTLE NIGGER BOYS.

Ten little nigger boys going out to dine,

A big bear swallowed one, and then there were nine.

Nine little nigger boys swinging on a gate
One tumbled underneath, and then there were eight.

Eight little nigger boys going off to Heaven,
One got left behind, and then there were seven.



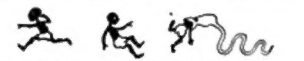
Seven little nigger boys chopping up sticks,
One chopped himself in half, and then there were six.

Six little nigger boys playing round a hive,
One met a bumble-bee, and then there were five.

Five little nigger boys ringing at a door,
One rung his little neck, and then there were four.

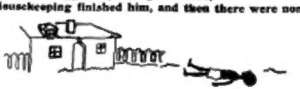
Four little nigger boys going out to tea,
One dropped inside his cup, and then there were three.

Three little nigger boys playing at the Zoo,
A rattlesnake tasted one, and then there were two.



Two little nigger boys sitting in the sun,
One got frizzled up, and then there was one

One little nigger boy living all alone,
Housekeeping finished him, and then there were none.



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IN SUBURBIA.

THE BIJOU RESIDENCE.

Mr. Smith, the enthusiastic gardener, is showing his admiring friends and relations the beauties of his garden, and has arrived at that wonderful masterpiece, his rockery.

"Yes, Mrs. Ponsonby, I did it all by myself."
Inquisitive Youthful Guest: "Please, Mr. Smith, whose grave is this?"

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MR. EDITOR —HIS PAGE.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS!

THOUGH Christmas is still almost a month away, I cannot do better than wish you the "Compliments of the Season" when presenting you with my special yearly effort—the Christmas number of THE ROYAL. More I can't say, though I should like to, for on page 152, "Mr. X" has said all that anyone can possibly hope to say in the way of Christmas greetings. He has taken the wind out of my sails, the speech out of my mouth, but not the goodwill out of my heart which I feel for all the readers of THE ROYAL.

"YOU MIGHT BE AN ENGLISHMAN!"

I AM safely back in England after a troublesome passage across the Atlantic, and still there are a few little Transatlantic experiences of mine which I should like to tell you about. Now I have a theory that nearly everybody would like to be mistaken for an Englishman. This may sound very much like the trumpetings of a blatant Jingo. In reality, however, my theory is borne out by the result of several experiments which I have tried in Holland, Germany, and finally in the United States.

You know, I daresay, that the average American is never tired of declaring his nation to be absolutely the finest in creation. We all think the same of our respective countries. But the American does not content himself merely with thinking; he speaks out loudly on the subject.

Well, whenever I met such a Yankee I would wait for an opportunity and then remark diffidently:

"D'you know, sir, I should never take you for an American. You look much more like an Englishman."

Was the man insulted, do you think? Not a bit of it. In every case he was so complimented that he could not help showing it by an increased affability of manner.

As I have said, I have tried the same experiment on the Continent, and invariably with similar results. You try it when you're abroad.

"ONE MAN'S AS GOOD AS ANOTHER —AND BETTER."

ONE man's as good as another in the States—in theory—not always in practice. Tram conductors, railway officials, and such like personages make a poor editor feel a very small person indeed. They treat the average traveller as I understand the Russian noble used to treat his serfs.

An English journalist who has traveled all over America told me an amusing case in point. He and some friends of his were having their luggage examined at the custom house. A porter hustled up to them. "Come on, you chaps," he said leading the way to another portion of the customs shed.

"I was overjoyed," said my friend, the journalist, "at this evidence of Yankee democracy! 'You chaps,' from a porter! Imagine that in England!

"But when immediately afterwards he pointed to another porter and said loftily:

"'You go to that *gentleman*,' our ideas concerning Yankee democracy were rather dashed."

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